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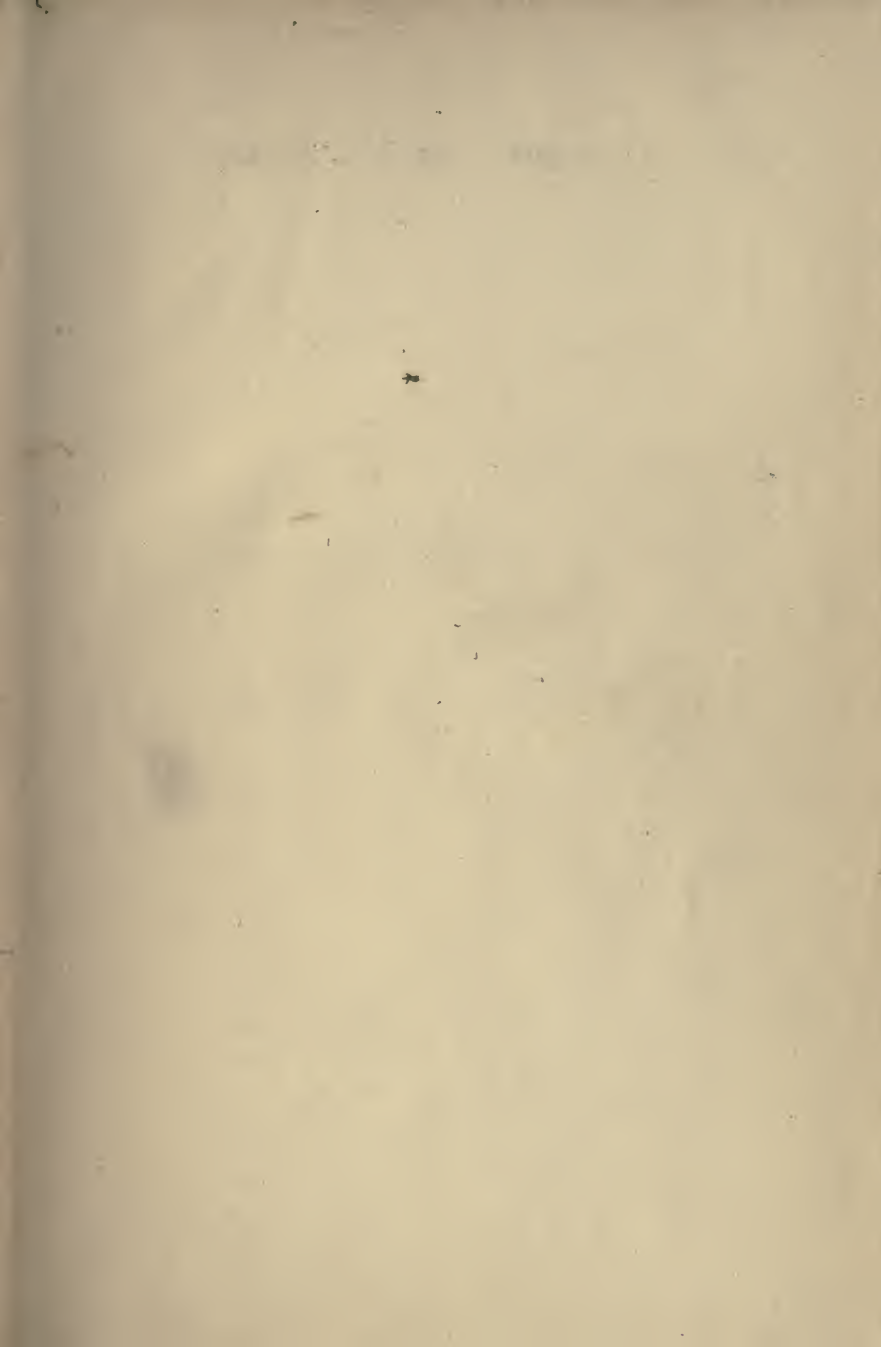
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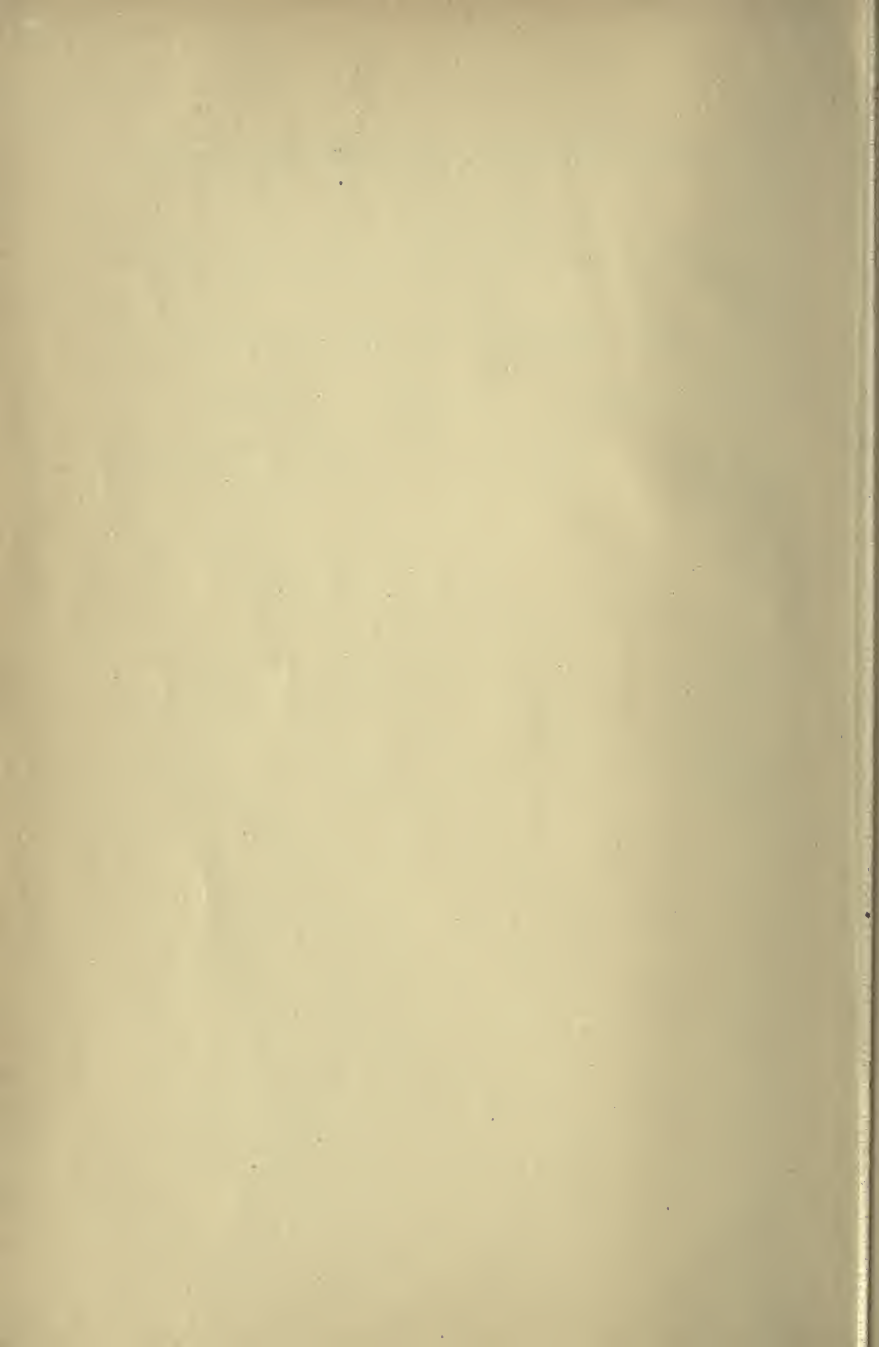
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ECLECTIC SCHOOL READINGS

OLD STORIES OF THE EAST

BY

JAMES BALDWIN



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STO. OF THE EAST.

W. P. 2.

PREFACE.



THERE are few stories which in themselves are more intensely interesting than those that have come down to us from antiquity through the medium of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet they have been so generally and so exclusively employed for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, that their purely literary qualities have not always received the attention which they merit. By very many persons, grown-up people as well as children, they are regarded as being inseparably connected with the services of the Sunday school and the Church, and hence scarcely to be thought of during the secular days of the week. There is really no good reason why this should be so. Indeed, there is no good reason why children in the day schools should not read these old stories of the East with as much freedom and with as eager zest as they peruse the classic myths of Greece or the ever-charming tales with which the world of modern fiction abounds.

In the present volume it has been the aim of the author to retell these stories from a literary standpoint, and in exactly the same manner as he would retell other stories pertaining to the infancy of the human race. He has endeavored to represent the actors in them as real men and women inhabiting the same world as ourselves; and, while it has been neither possible nor

desirable to omit frequent allusions to the supernatural, care has been taken not to trespass on the domain of the religious teacher. In order the better to carry out this plan, the Hebrew names are used sparingly, and are often omitted in favor of their English equivalents. It is believed that this device will not only give to some of the stories a flavor of newness, but that it will in many instances help the young reader to a readier appreciation of their beauty.

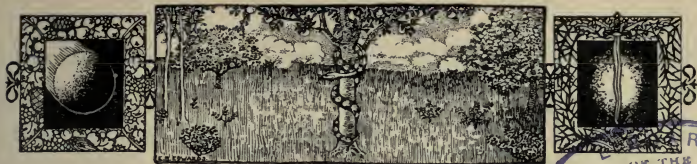
While each of the twelve stories in this volume is wholly independent of the others, and may be read without any knowledge of those which precede it, there is nevertheless a continuity from the first to the last, giving to the collection the completeness of a single narrative. It comprises, in short, the history of the origin of the Hebrew race, and of the chief events connected with the life of that people down to the period of their greatest prosperity.

Whether or not this presentation of the subject may be an incentive to a closer acquaintance with the matchless volume from which the stories are derived, has not been a matter of consideration on the part of the writer. His sole aim has been to prepare a book which all children at school may read with pleasure, both because of the simple language in which it is written and because of the conceptions of beauty and truth that are found in the stories which it contains.

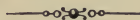
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OLD STORIES OF THE EAST.



THE GARDEN OF DELIGHT.

ONCE there was a Man, and he lived in a wonderful garden. I do not know how large the garden was, but it was full of beautiful things. Four rivers flowed through it; and there were many little lakes and waterfalls, and cool, bubbling springs. All the finest fruits in the world grew there, and the trees were full of blossoms, and the ground was covered with flowers the whole year round: for there was no winter there,—no snow, nor ice, nor killing frost; but every day the warm winds blew softly from the sea, and the mild sun looked down from the clear blue sky.

The Man had been in the garden ever since he could remember. The great Master had placed him there to watch and tend it. For a long time

he was very happy, and he had no thought of anything but of his work and of the many beautiful things that were around him. After a while, however, he began to feel very lonely in that great garden all by himself. He thought how much better it would be if he could only have some one to talk with, and to help him in his work. He could not remember that he had ever seen any human being, and he did not know whether there were any other men or women in all the world. But he was very lonely; and the more he thought about it, the lonelier he became.

One day the Master sent a Woman into the garden, to live there and to be the Man's wife. She was very beautiful,—graceful and tall and fair; and when the Man saw her, he was filled with wonder and delight. And she was pleased too; for the Man was noble and strong and brave and handsome, and all that the Master had told her about him was true. And so the two lived together in the garden, and tended and kept it. They had a care not only for the flowers and fruits, but for the animals; for among the trees there were many birds, and all kinds of beasts roamed freely about the garden. When the Man and the Woman walked out, every creature was glad to see them. Lions and tigers, as well as the timid little animals

of the fields, would play before them; and all kinds of birds would sing in the branches above them. Everything that lived in the garden was tame and gentle, and there was nothing that would hurt any one or make one afraid. There was not even a thorn or a thistle to be found anywhere.

In the very center of the garden there stood a wonderful tree that was always full of fine fruit. The Man and the Woman went often to look at it, and to sit in its shade; but they did not touch the beautiful apples that grew upon its branches. The Master of the garden had told the Man to let them alone.

“You may eat every other kind of fruit,” he said, “but you must never, never taste these apples.”

And then he told the Man what would happen if he should ever taste them. There was a kind of poison in them that would change his whole nature. He would grow tired of his work; he would become restless and ill at ease; he would grumble and complain; he would make everybody unhappy; he would frighten the birds, and they would fly away from him; he would abuse the beasts, and they would become his enemies; he would neglect his duty, and thorns and thistles would spring up; and by and by he would die.

Often when the Man and the Woman looked at

the fruit, they wondered how anything so beautiful could do so much harm. But whenever the thought came into their minds that they would like to have just one taste of it, the Man would shake his head, and say, "The Master forbids."

Then, hand in hand, they would walk away; and the birds in the trees would sing as they passed, and the beasts would dance before them.

There was one cunning Beast, however, that did not love the Man and Woman. He was a strange creature, that was never so happy as when plotting mischief. But in the garden, where everything was friendly to everything else, he did not dare to do any harm openly.

One day he met the Woman alone, just after she had been looking at the beautiful fruit. He knew that she wanted to taste it.

"Do you believe what the Master told you about those apples?" he said.

"Yes," she said; "for the Master planted the tree, and he knows all about its fruit."

"You are very silly," said the cunning Beast. "I know all about the fruit, and I tell you it will not hurt you at all."

"But why, then, should the Master forbid us to taste it?" she asked.

"He knows that it will make you wise," he said.

“He knows that it will make you like him; and he wants to keep you poor and ignorant and weak, so that you will not know how to do anything but tend and keep his garden.”

“The fruit really is beautiful,” said the Woman; and she turned and looked at the tree again.

“And it is good, too,” said the Beast. “Come, I’ll get one of the apples for you, and you can taste it. He will never know.”

And while the Woman stood and hardly knew what to do, the Beast ran and pulled one of the apples from the tree and gave it to her. It seemed to be prettier than ever, now that it lay in her hand.

She would just take a little taste. It could do no harm.

Ah! but it was so good, that she ate it all up.

Then she thought it would be a great pity if the Man could not taste of the fruit too; and she went to the tree and picked the finest apple she could reach, and ran to give it to him.

“It is not true about those apples,” she said. “I have eaten one of them, and it hasn’t hurt me at all. And so I have brought you one. Just taste it, and see how good it is.”

“Well, the Master will never know,” said the Man; and he took the apple, and ate it, and thought it was very good.

A little while after that, the Master came into the garden to look at things and to talk with the Man and the Woman; for he very often came in the cool of the evening, and walked with them among the flowers and trees. They heard him calling their names, and they felt sure that he had found out all about what they had done. So, instead of answering him and running to meet him, as they had always done before, they made haste and hid themselves in a thicket of underbrush.

But the Master saw them, and bade them come out. Then he asked what they had been doing to make them afraid of him. Of course, they had to tell him. But the Man tried to put all the blame on the Woman.

“She gave it to me, and I did eat,” he said.

And then the Woman tried to excuse herself, and said that it was the fault of the cunning Beast.

“He told me that it would not harm us,” she said. “He told me that if we would eat of it, we should be wise; and when he offered me one of the apples, it was so beautiful that I could not help but taste it.”

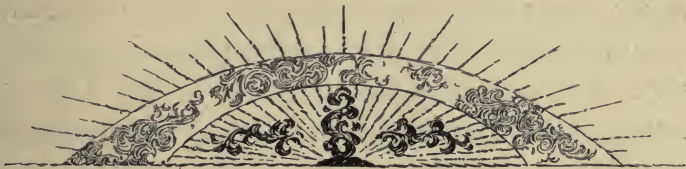
“But did I not forbid you even to touch the fruit of the tree?” said the Master. “Did I not tell you that, if you did so, it would cause grief and pain and death? And now, strange to say,

you have chosen to believe this Beast rather than me.”

The Man hung his head, and said not a word; and the Woman wept.

Then the Master told them what he would do to punish them. As for the Beast, he was turned into a serpent, and has crawled on the ground and been hated by all men ever since. And as for the Man and the Woman, they were driven out of the Garden of Delight, and were told that they must work for their bread all the rest of their days. Thorns and thistles grew up in their path, and the birds stopped singing and flew from them in fear, and the wild beasts snarled at them and slunk away into the forest. And the Master placed a watchman at the gate of the garden, with a sun-bright sword in his hand, so that nobody could ever go into it again.

The name of the Man was Adam, and the name of the Woman was Eve.





THE TWO BROTHERS.

WHEN the Man and the Woman were driven out of the Garden of Delight, they wandered about for some time, hardly knowing what to do. The whole world was before them, and they could go where they chose; and yet they wanted to stay as near as they could to the place where they had passed so many happy days. So at last the Man built a little hut in a pleasant spot near the bank of a great river, where the sun shone warm, and the grass grew tall, and the trees were laden with wild fruits; and there they lived. The Man dug up the ground, and sowed seeds, and raised grain; and the Woman kept the little house, and learned to make clothing of fig leaves, and afterwards of the skins of animals.

And so one year after another passed by, and in time the house was full of children, and it was as much as the Man could do to find food enough for the many mouths that were always wanting to be fed; but the Woman, when she saw the happy,

smiling faces of her boys and girls, and heard their childish prattle, would not have given them up for all the joys that she might have had in the Garden of Delight.

The eldest of the boys was a headstrong fellow, bold and rash; and when he grew up, he became a farmer, like his father. The second son was a gentle lad, but, with all his gentleness, so vain that his mother called him Vanity; and when he grew up he became a shepherd, and tended sheep on the grass-covered hills.

It was the custom of the young men to carry presents now and then to the great Master,—a custom which their father also observed, and which they had learned from him. One day they went, as usual, each with his gift. The Farmer carried a basket of ripe fruit, yellow and golden, mellow and sweet. The Shepherd carried two young lambs, white and spotless as the snow on the high mountain tops. The Master was pleased with the lambs; but for some reason—I cannot tell what—he did not care for the basket of fruit. The proud heart of the Shepherd was filled with joy, and I do not know how often he taunted his elder brother because he had failed to please the Master. The Farmer was at first grieved, and then he grew angry; and one day, when they were in the

field together, his wrath was stirred up until he could hold himself no longer: in a blind fit of rage he struck his brother a fierce blow, and stretched him dead upon the ground.

When he saw that the Shepherd did not move nor speak, he was frightened, and ran and hid himself among the trees. But he seemed to see the white face of his handsome brother always before him; and he heard a voice, saying, "Where is he?"

"Am I my brother's keeper?" he asked; and he tried to stop his ears, so that he should not hear anything more.

But the voice said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground."

Then the young man knew that it was the Master's voice; and he covered his face and stood trembling.

"For this thing which you have done," said the Master, "you shall wander alone and unfriended through the land. Even the earth shall be against you; for when you till the ground, it shall not yield grain, and the trees shall refuse to bear fruit for you as in bygone days, and naught that you do shall prosper."

Then the young man, in great distress, prayed the Master that he would somewhat lighten his punishment. "For," said he, "if I go out thus to

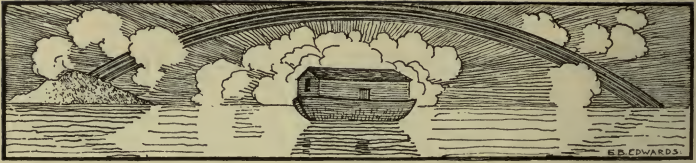
wander alone and unfriended through the land, the first man that meets me will slay me.”

So then the Master put a mark upon him to warn all who saw him that they should do him no harm. And the young man wandered far away into a strange land in the distant East. There he made his home, and there he built a city,—the first city of which we have any account. But no matter what he did, the dreadful mark was always upon him; and he fancied that the air was full of voices, asking, “Where is your brother? Where is your brother?” Thus he lived unfriended and in distress all the days of his life.

The name of this farmer was Cain, a word which in ancient times meant Man; and the name of the brother whom he slew was Abel, or Vanity.

Three of the great-grandsons of Cain became men of much renown: one, Jabal, was the founder of a nation of tent dwellers; one, Jubal, was the inventor of the harp; and one, Tubal-cain, worked in iron and brass, and was the most famous smith of ancient times.





THE FLOOD OF WATERS.

IN those very early times people lived much longer than they live now. Whether it was because the air was milder, or the water purer, or their food more simple, I do not know; but it is said that men often lived to be seven hundred, eight hundred, and even nine hundred years old; and one man was nine hundred and sixty-nine years of age when he died. A person was only in his prime at five hundred, and the golden days of childhood and youth must have lasted for at least a century.

You would think that people were very happy in those days, but they were not. They were quarreling and fighting among themselves almost all the time. Those who were powerful and strong oppressed those who were feeble and weak. The rich robbed the poor. Strange cruel men, called giants, roamed here and there, filling the world with terror. There was no peace or safety anywhere, but only dis-

tress and fear and dreadful wickedness. It seemed as if it would have been better had the earth never been made.

In the midst of all this wickedness there was only one man who was good and true. The name of this man was Noah, which, in the language of that ancient time, meant Comfort. Why he was called by that name I do not know; but perhaps it was because his ways were so cheery and pleasant, and his heart so kind and pure. He often told his neighbors how wrong it was to do as they were doing, and he warned them that if they did not change their ways some great disaster would surely befall them. But they only laughed at him, and then kept on in their wickedness as before.

At last, when Noah was five hundred years old, he began to do a thing at which everybody wondered. He and his three sons set to work felling trees in the woods; and when they had cut a great deal of timber, they hauled it into one place, and began to shape the logs into posts and beams and rafters and planks. The neighbors came and looked on while the men worked, and then they jeered at them.

“What are you doing?” they asked.

“We are building a boat,” said the good man quietly.

“Ha, ha!” laughed his neighbors. “Who ever did so foolish a thing as to build a boat on a hilltop a hundred miles from the sea? You have lost your senses.”

“I have not lost my senses,” was the answer. “The great God whom I worship is angry with you because of your wickedness, and he is going to send a great flood of water upon you to destroy you from the earth. It was he that bade me build this boat, or ark, that so I and my family may be saved alive; and you too may be saved if you will only turn about and live as you ought, and help me in this work.”

But they laughed and jeered all the more, and instead of helping they tried to hinder him.

It took the good man and his sons a long time to finish the boat, — a hundred years, or nearly so. It was a huge vessel, five hundred feet long and eighty feet broad. It was three stories high, with one door, and one window in the side, and the whole was covered with a roof. When at last it was all ready, and made water-tight without and within, they began to store it with food. They put into it not only provisions for themselves, but a great supply of hay and grain, and roots and fruit, and eatables of every sort. Then they went out into the woods and fields, and brought together all the wild and tame animals

BUT THEY LAUGHED AND JERRED ALL THE MORE.



that could be found, — beasts and fowls and creeping things, two of every kind that lived on the earth. It was a strange sight to see these creatures marching up the hill, and going quietly into the great boat, as if they knew that it was the only safe place for them. The lions did not quarrel with the tigers, and the sheep were not afraid of the wolves; but each one took the place that had been set apart for it in the ark, and all were as peaceable and kind as though they were members of the same happy family. When the last of these creatures had been safely housed, Noah and his three sons and their wives, eight persons in all, went up into the ark, and the door was shut behind them.

Then the rain began to fall in torrents, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. For forty days and forty nights this went on without stopping, and the sea was filled to overflowing, and the water covered the land until even the tops of the mountains were hidden by it. All the people of the land were drowned, and all the cattle and wild beasts and creeping things in field or wood were destroyed. But the great ark floated on the waters, and the eight good people and the living creatures that were housed within it were kept alive and safe.

For five long months the land was covered by the

flood; and those who looked out of the window of the ark could see nothing but water, water everywhere. At last, however, there came a great wind which seemed to drive the waters away; and one day the ark settled on the top of a high mountain which men call Mount Ararat to this day. But still the waters sank very slowly, and the people in the ark dared not open the door, for there was no place for them to set their feet outside.

After forty days, Noah opened the window and let a raven fly out; for he wanted to see if the bird could live outside of the ark. The raven flew back and forth from one bare mountain crag to another, but it never came back. By and by Noah sent out a dove in the same way; but the dove could find nothing to eat, nor any safe place in which to rest, and so at last returned to the ark.

A week later, however, when the people looked out of the window, there was no water in sight. From the high place where the ark was lying they could see nothing but bare rocks and rugged peaks and mountain gorges. They did not know that the lower slopes were already green with grass, and that the trees were budding and blossoming as in the time of spring. But one morning they sent out the dove again, and in the evening she came back with an olive branch in her mouth.

“The waters have dried up, and the fields are beginning to appear,” they said.

They staid yet another week in the ark, and then they sent out the dove for the third time. But she did not return again; for now all the fields were dry, and she could find plenty of food and a place to build her nest. But Noah was not yet ready to leave the ark.

“Wait a while,” he said, “until the voice of God shall bid us go forth.”

And so, for two months more, they staid in the great vessel, and knew nothing of what was going on in the woods and plains below them. But one day Noah and his sons lifted off the roof of the ark and looked around; and, at the same time, they seemed to hear a voice bidding them go forth and choose homes for themselves in the land which the great flood had made desolate. Then they opened wide the door of the ark, and all went out, and made their way down the steep mountain side to the green and pleasant plains below; and the beasts and the fowls and the creeping things went out also, two by two, and scattered hither and thither over the land. They had been in the ark just one year.

And when Noah and his family reached the foot of the mountain, and saw the meadows dotted with flowers, and the trees already laden with fruit, and

the land lying smiling and fair before them, their hearts were filled with thankfulness. And they built an altar of stones, and worshiped the great God who had blessed them and kept them through so many perils. And while they worshiped, they heard a voice, saying, —

“ I will not again curse the ground for man’s sake. So long as the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.”

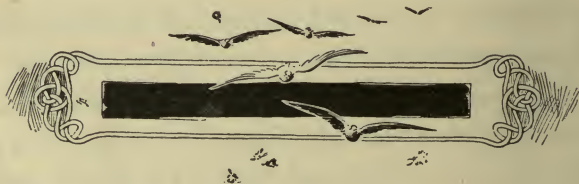
Then, looking up, they saw a rainbow spanning the sky.

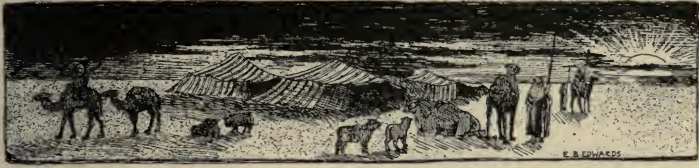
“ It is the bow of promise ! ” they cried.

After that, the three sons of Noah went out with their wives into the broad rich valleys that lie on either side of the great river Euphrates; and there they built themselves homes. And by and by many children were born to them, and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, — so many that the land was full again of busy people, just as it had been before the great flood. Then some of the people journeyed to the East, and built cities for themselves in the vast plains beyond the snowy mountains. Some went to the South, and found life easy under sunny skies, where the trees were always laden with fruit, and there was no need to toil, or, indeed, to take

any thought for the morrow. Some went to the North, where the summers were short, and the winters long and cold; and they learned to hunt the wild beasts in the great woods, or to build rude boats and sail from place to place along the shore of the sea. Some went to the West, and herded cattle and sheep in the green pasture lands that stretched away and away, even to the Great Sea and the borders of Arabia the Happy. And some crossed over into the rich country of the Nile, where the date palm flourished, and bountiful crops of grain were harvested almost every month in the year. But many still remained in the valley of the Euphrates.

It was thus that the whole world was peopled once again.





THE GREAT CHIEF.

I. THE PROMISE.

IN the fertile country many miles to the west of the Euphrates valley there lived a famous Chief who was very rich. It was not the custom in that land to build houses or to have any fixed place for a home; and so this Chief dwelt in tents, and roved hither and thither, wherever his fancy led him, or wherever the pastures were greenest, or the water most plentiful, or his neighbors most kind. Once he pitched his tents in the wooded valley of the Jordan, once he dwelt for a year in the treeless plains of Arabia, and once when there was a great drought he went down into the Land of the Nile, and camped under the palm trees in full view of the King's palace. But among all the lands through which he had wandered, there was none that seemed so fair to him as the grassy plains and vine-covered hills that lay between the sandy desert and the eastern shore of the Great Sea. Oftentimes when,

in the evening, he stood in the door of his tent and looked towards the setting sun, he fancied that he heard a voice, saying, —

“ All this lovely land that you see shall be yours, and your children’s, and your children’s children’s, forever. Go forth and walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it; for I have promised it, and will give it unto you.”

Then the great Chief would bow his head and worship and give thanks.

“ It is the voice of God,” he would say; “ and this land that is so fair and in every way so lovely is the Promised Land.”

And in the early morning he liked to stand by the eastern door of his tent, and watch the sun as it rose from the mystic regions far beyond the valley of the Euphrates. He was now nearly a hundred years old; but he stood as tall and straight as in the days of his youth, his eyes were bright and keen, his step was quick and firm, his voice was clear and strong. The plain before him was dotted with flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle, and droves of camels; and in the grove on either side of him were clusters of tents where lived many busy people, — serving women, and milkmaids, and shepherds, and armed men, — whose only thought was to do his bidding.

Did I say that the Chief was very rich? Everything that he could see from the eastern door of the tent, except the land and the sky, was his own. Sheep, cattle, camels, tents, even the men and women and children, belonged to him; for in those times one man was often the master and owner of many others; and, as he was always kind and just and fatherly, nobody complained, and nobody thought there was anything wrong about it.

The great Chief had not always been a wanderer and dweller in tents. In his youth he had lived with his father and his kinsfolk in the valley of the Euphrates; and it was there that he married his wife, a dark-eyed beauty whom everybody called the Princess. But when he was seventy-five years old, he heard a voice, saying, —

“Get you out from this country, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, and go westward unto the land that I will show you.”

“It is the voice of God,” he said; and he fell down to the ground and worshiped. And on the morrow he gathered together his goods and all his household, and went forth in search of the Promised Land. And that was the way in which he became a roving chieftain in strange lands, and that was why he liked always to watch the rising sun as it came up out of its golden palace in the East.

II. THE NEW NAME.

Now, at this time the Chief and the Princess had no child of their own. But they had with them a nephew named Lot, who was married and had a family of fair daughters, and was almost as rich in flocks and herds as was the Chief himself. One summer they pitched their tents in the hilly country to the west of the Jordan; for in the lower valleys men had built houses and were tilling the ground, and on the level plain were two busy cities called Sodom and Gomorrah. But there was not much water among the hills; and when the Chief's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen met at the wells to water their cattle, they often quarreled and fought. So at last the Chief thought that it would be better for him and his nephew to separate.

"See all this fair country with rich pastures to the right and the left," he said to Lot. "There is certainly room enough for both of us. So do you choose any part of the land that you like best, and I will take the rest."

And Lot chose the fields that lay in the level plain, and took a house in Sodom, which was near by; for he thought that a settled life in town would be pleasanter than dwelling, first here and then there, in tents. But the Chief went a little farther

away, and encamped for a time in the grassy plain of Mamre, close by the hills of Hebron.

One night, as the Chief lay dreaming in his tent, he was very unhappy because he had no son to whom he might leave his great riches and the pleasant land that had been promised to him and his children forever.

“How can this promise come true,” he said, “when I have no children?”

But even while he was complaining, he looked up at the sky, where millions of stars were twinkling; and a voice spoke to him, and said that not only should a son be born to him, but his people should in time be more in number than the starry host above him. The good man wondered how this could be, and yet he believed and never doubted.

“It is the voice of God,” he said; and he lifted his hands towards heaven, and worshiped.

And the voice said, “Men shall henceforth call your name Abraham; for that is a word which means Father of a Multitude, and a father of nations you shall be.”

III. THE STRANGERS.

The summer that the Chief was ninety-nine years old, a strange and dreadful thing happened.

One hot day he was sitting in the shade of his tent, looking out over the plain towards the city where his nephew Lot was living. All at once he saw three noble strangers standing by the tent door; and, as they seemed to be travelers from some distant land, he ran to meet and greet them, as was the custom of the time. He bowed himself down before one of them who seemed to be the leader, and said,—

“Pray do not pass by without resting a little while. Come and sit down under this tree, and I will have water brought that you may wash your feet. And then you shall eat a little and refresh yourselves before you pass on.”

“You speak well,” said the strangers. “Let it be as you have said.” And they sat down under the tree, as they were bidden.

Then the Chief ran into the women’s tent and said to his wife, “Be quick, and knead three measures of fine meal, and make it into cakes, and bake them on the hearth; for three strangers are waiting under the tree before the door.”

Then he ran into the field and fetched the finest calf from the herd, and gave it to one of his young men to kill and roast for his strange guests. And when it was ready, he took butter and milk and the hot cakes and the choicest parts of the meat, and set

the food before the strangers who were waiting under the tree.

“Surely,” he whispered to his wife, “these are not common men; for never have I seen any that were so stately and noble. Their leader must be the Lord himself, and his two companions are none other than angels.” And then he hastened back to wait upon them while they ate.

“Where is your wife?” asked one of the strangers, looking around.

“Behold, she is in her tent,” said the Chief.

The Princess was at that moment standing inside the door. Ninety years old though she was, she was as fair and lovely as when the Chief had wooed her in her girlhood in the valley of the Euphrates, more than seventy summers before. When the strangers saw her blushing among the curtains of the tent, they told the Chief that the son whom he had waited for so long would be born that very year. The Princess overheard what they said, and she laughed, because she did not believe that it could be so. But her husband, the Chief, said,—

“It is the voice of God, and it must be true.”

At last the strangers arose, and started to go on their way; and the Chief took his staff in his hand and walked across the fields with them. When they reached the top of the hill and looked towards the

east, they saw the fair cities of Sodom and Gomorrah lying in the midst of the rich plain far below them; and around the cities were orchards and vineyards, and fields of ripening grain, and broad pasture lands where thousands of cattle were feeding.

“Behold these cities, how beautiful they are!” said the Chief.

“And yet,” said the strangers, “they are so wicked that God will destroy them this very night. We are even now on our way to see if there is any good thing in them at all.”

“Oh, say not so!” cried the Chief, much grieved at the thought. “Surely, God will not let the innocent perish in order that he may punish the doers of evil.”

Then, while the men walked on down the hill, he lifted up his hands, and prayed God to spare the cities of the plain.

“Suppose there are fifty good men in the place, wilt thou not spare it, O Lord?” he said.

And the Lord said, “Yes; if I find fifty righteous men in Sodom, I will spare the whole city for their sake.”

“Suppose there shall lack five of being fifty, wilt thou destroy the place for lack of five?” said the Chief.

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five."

"Suppose forty good men should be found," said the Chief.

And the Lord said, "I will spare it for the sake of forty."

"Oh, have patience with me, and do not be angry!" said the Chief; "but suppose there should be thirty?"

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy the place if thirty good men are there."

"Nor if there are twenty?" said the Chief.

"For the sake of the twenty, I will spare it," was the answer.

"Oh, have patience once more!" said the Chief; "but suppose there are only ten good men among so many?"

And the Lord said, "I will spare them all, that so the ten shall not perish."

Then the Chief turned about, and walked thoughtfully back to his tents. But when the strangers went down into Sodom, they found only one good man in all the city, and that was Lot, the nephew of Abraham. So, after they had warned him and made him hasten out of danger, there came a great storm of fire and hail; and the cities were burned, and the people of the plains destroyed; and

the beautiful valley was filled with salt water, and became the place of a sea, that is called the Dead Sea even to this day.

And when Chief Abraham arose in the morning and looked towards the east, he saw the smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace; and he knew that the cities of the plain were no more.

IV. THE BURNT OFFERING.

When Chief Abraham was a hundred years old and his wife ninety-one, the thing came true that had been so often promised, and a son was born to them; and they named the boy Laughter, because his mother had laughed at the thought of such old people having a child. And there was great joy in the tents of the Chief, because now there was an heir who after a while would be the owner of the flocks and herds, and silver and gold, which the old man had brought together; and a great feast was made, to which even the kings of the land were invited, — a feast the memory of which has been kept in mind even to our own day.

And the child grew, and became a fine lad, handsome and quick and strong; and his father, rich though he was, loved and prized him more highly than all his wealth. One day the thought came

into Chief Abraham's mind that God had given him everything, and therefore he ought to show his gratitude by offering his most precious possession to God. But what was his most precious possession? Was it not the boy Laughter? And could he give him up? Yes, he would do anything to obey the call of duty.

In those times people thought there was only one way of giving anything to God, and that was to lay it on an altar, and, after it had been slain, to set fire to the wood beneath it and burn it to ashes. They thought, that, as the flames seized upon and removed it from sight, God took it to himself.

So, when Chief Abraham had become fully persuaded of his duty, he made up his mind to offer the boy Laughter to God. One morning very early he saddled a donkey, and took with him the boy and two servants, and set out for a mountain, three days' journey away, where he had before offered sacrifices to God. When they came to the foot of the mountain, he said to his men, —

“Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go up alone.”

Then he put a bundle of wood for the altar upon Laughter's shoulders, and took the long knife in one hand and a fagot of fire in the other; and the two began to climb the mountain together.

By and by the lad said, "My father!"

"What is it, my son?" said Chief Abraham.

"Here is the wood, and there is the fire," said the lad; "but where is the lamb for the offering?"

"My son," said the old man, "God will provide a lamb for the offering."

And the two went on together.

When they came to the top of the mountain, they built an altar of stones, and laid the wood upon it. And the Chief bound his son with cords, and laid him upon the wood on the altar. And he stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay the lad. But while his hand was still raised, he heard a voice that seemed to come out of the sky, calling him by name.

"Here I am," he answered, without looking up.

"Touch not the lad," said the voice. "Now, indeed, is it clear that you fear the Lord; for you have not withheld your son, your only son, from him."

And then the Chief lifted his eyes, and saw, close by, a ram caught by the horns in the bushes. And he quickly loosed Laughter from the cords that bound him, and then laid the ram on the wood in his place. And when they had slain the ram, and burnt it as an offering, the two went down

the mountain together, rejoicing. And after that, Abraham pitched his tents by the wells of Beer-sheba, far to the south, near the borders of the great sandy desert. And there they dwelt many years.

V. THE FAITHFUL SERVANT.

One morning in early summer Chief Abraham sat in the door of his tent, and talked with his head servant, who had the care of all his goods, and managed all his business. He talked of his old home, where he had lived as a child and as a young man, in the far-away valley of the river Euphrates. He talked of his kinsfolk, who were still in that eastern country, and whom he had not seen for now almost fifty years. He talked of his own wandering life, and of the land flowing with milk and honey which God had promised to give to his children and his children's children, to hold as their own forever.

“And now,” he said, “here is my son Laughter, who was born in this new western land. He has never seen his father's kindred, nor visited his father's native place. He is now a man, and he ought before long to take to himself a wife; for I am a hundred and twenty-five years old, and soon my wealth will be his. But I cannot bear to have him

wed any of the rude maidens of this barbarous land. Not one of them is worthy to be his wife."

"But, my master," said the servant, "some of them are very beautiful, and they are the daughters of kings. How can we do better than choose one of them for the young man?"

"I will tell you," said the Chief. "We will find a wife for him among the daughters of my kinsmen in the valley of the great river where I lived in my youth. You shall get ready at once, and go and choose one for him, and bring her hither."

"But what if the maiden will not come?" said the servant. "Wouldn't it be better for Laughter to go with me, and choose for himself? For no maiden can well refuse when she sees how comely and fair the young man is."

"Not so!" cried the Chief. "My son shall not go with you. He might be tempted to make his home in that country where life is easy. But he must stay here; for all these rich plains and wooded hills, as far as you can see from yonder mountain top, are to be his and his children's forever. The God whom I worship has promised it. No, you shall not take him with you."

"But how shall I find the way?" asked the servant. "The country is far distant, and there are no roads thither."

“The good angels will go before you, and show you the way,” said the Chief.

“And then, if no maiden will come back with me, what shall I do?” said the servant.

“Then you shall return, and you will be free from blame,” said the Chief. “But do you make ready and start upon your journey this very day.”

Then the servant chose ten of his master's best camels, and loaded some of them with food for the long journey, and some of them with rich gifts of gold and silver and perfumes and beautiful garments; and while it was yet morning, he set out across the great plains towards the distant valley of the river Euphrates. And a company of his master's trustiest men went with him as guards and helpers.

Much of the way was across broad, trackless plains, and among rocky hills, where there was no road nor other pathway; much of the way was over a barren, sandy desert, where the sun shone hot and no living thing could be seen. And it was many weary days before the servant, with his little company, reached the green valleys, and knew that they were in the country of his master's kindred. Late one afternoon he came to a little city, and stopped outside of the walls by a well of water. It was about the time of day when the women of the place liked to come out with their pitchers and draw water for

use in the household. The servant made his camels lie down about the well; and then he prayed that the God whom his master worshiped would speed the day, and show kindness to him, and give him a sign, that so his tiresome journey might be at an end.

“Behold,” he said, “I stand here by the well of water, and the maidens of the city come out to fill their pitchers. I will say to the fairest among them, ‘Let me drink a little water of thy pitcher;’ and if one of them shall say, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels drink also,’ let that be a sign that she is the maiden whom I shall choose for Laughter. In that way I shall know that kindness is shown to my master.”

While he was yet speaking, a fair young girl came tripping down from the city gate with her pitcher on her shoulder. As she came nearer, the servant thought that he had never seen any one so beautiful. And she went down the stone steps into the well, and came up with her pitcher dripping. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, —

“Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher!”

And she let down the pitcher upon her hand, and said, “Drink, my lord!” And when he had drunk as much as he wanted, she said kindly, “Now



“LET ME, I PRAY THEE, DRINK A LITTLE WATER!”

I will draw water for your camels, and let them drink also.”

And she ran and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and hastened back to the well to draw more water. And the man stood and watched her, and wondered if indeed the good angels had shown him the way, and the God of his master had been kind to him; for the maiden was so beautiful, and withal so kind, that he could not think of choosing any one else to be young Laughter's wife.

When the camels had done drinking, and the girl had filled her pitcher again with clear, cool water to carry home, he gave her a golden earring of great beauty, and two golden bracelets for her wrists. A shrewd man he was, and he knew right well what would delight the maiden's heart. Then he asked her whose daughter she was, and whether there was room in her father's house for him to lodge there. She told him both her father's name and her grandfather's, and said, —

“There is room enough in our house for you, and for all the men that are with you; and we have plenty of straw and food for your camels.”

The servant bowed down, and thanked the God of his master for the kindness that had been shown him; for the name of the maiden's grandfather was that of Chief Abraham's own brother, whom he

had left behind him when he went to the new western country so long ago, and the servant knew that he had found his master's kindred.

VI. BEAUTY AND LAUGHTER.

The young girl hastily took up her pitcher again, and then, carrying it on her shoulder, ran home to her mother's house in the city. She wanted to show her mother and her brother the pretty earring and the bracelets that the stranger had given her. She hurriedly told them all that had happened to her at the well; and the whole family crowded around her to see the beautiful gifts. And when she had finished her story, her brother ran out to the well to find the stranger, and lead him to the house.

"Come in, come in!" he said. "Why do you wait outside the walls? Our house is all ready for you, and we have plenty of food and shelter for the camels."

Then the servant went with him to the house; and they took off the packs from the camels' backs, and gave them straw and food. And the brother had water brought for the servant and the men who were with him to wash their feet.

"Now come in and eat supper with us," he said.

“I will not eat until I have told my errand,” said the servant.

“Tell it,” said the maiden’s mother, “and we will eat afterwards.”

Then the servant told them who his master was, and how rich and great he had become in the new western country where he had gone fifty years before. And he told them about the young man whom they called Laughter, and who was to have all his master’s wealth; and how there was no maiden in all the western land who was good enough to be the young man’s wife; and how the great Chief had now sent his servant to this his fatherland to find a wife for Laughter among the fair daughters of his own kindred.

“And I came this day unto the well,” he said, “and I asked there for a sign; and before I had done asking, the sign came true. This fair maiden came out of the city with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down into the well, and drew water; and I said, ‘Let me drink, I pray thee!’ And she made haste and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also!’ So I drank, and she made the camels drink. And I said, ‘Whose daughter are you, my fair maiden?’ And she told me her father’s name, and her grandfather’s. And I knew

that the God of my master had prospered me, and had led me in the right way to take the granddaughter of my master's brother to his son Laughter. Now, I have told you my errand, and you know why I am here. Tell me if you will deal kindly with my master, your kinsman; for if not, I will go my way, and trouble you no more."

And the girl's brother and her mother said, "This thing has been ordered by the God of your master, and we have no right to speak either good or bad about it. Here is the maiden herself, — the maiden so rightfully called Beauty. Take her, and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as your master's God has ordered."

When the servant heard this, he bowed himself to the ground, and gave thanks. Then he brought rare jewels of silver and gold, and rich garments of linen and silk, and gave them to Beauty, and to her mother and her brother. And there was a great feast in the house that night, and the wonderful news was told throughout the city; and Beauty, clad like a princess, was more beautiful than any other maiden that had ever been seen in the green valleys of the Euphrates.

In the morning the servant arose with his men, and said, —

“Let me go back now to my master.”

But Beauty's mother begged him to let the maiden stay with her a few days longer, at least ten.

“My master's God has prospered me,” said the servant; “and so I beg that you will not hinder, but let us go at once.”

“Well,” said the mother, “we will call the damsel, and ask her.”

They called Beauty, and said, “Beauty, will you go with this man to-day?”

And she said, “Yes, I will go.”

So, while they all wept, they blessed her, and bade her Godspeed.

“Thou art our fair sister, so well beloved,” they said. “In the ages to come, may thousands of millions of people remember thee and think of thee as their mother, and may thy children and thy children's children wax great in the earth, and rule over all their enemies.”

And Beauty and her nurse and her waiting women rode upon the camels, and followed the servant and his men across the barren desert and the broad green plains to the rich new country in the distant West.

At the end of many days they came into a land where there were great herds of cattle, and flocks

of sheep, and droves of camels; and the servant told her that all these were only a part of the riches of his master. And it so happened that Laughter was walking in the fields in the cool of the evening, and thinking of many things, but most of his father's kindred in the far East, and of the servant who had been sent thither to find him a wife. Suddenly, on looking up, he saw the ten camels coming across the plain. They were quite near to him, and he could see that there were women riding. He wondered what kind of wife his father's servant had brought him; but he could not see her face for the heavy veil that was over it.

For when Beauty first saw Laughter walking in the fields, she had asked the servant, "What man is that who is walking this way?" for she was pleased to see how noble and handsome he seemed.

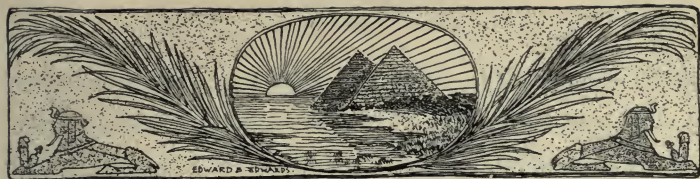
"That is my young master," answered the servant.

Then Beauty was glad, and she covered herself with her veil. And when she met Laughter, she alighted from her camel, and Laughter led her to his mother's tent, where they were wedded; and when she lifted the veil from her blushing face, and he saw how wonderfully fair she was, he was very glad, and he loved her. And Beauty and Laughter lived long and happily together in their own tent in the midst of the green plains. And their father,

Chief Abraham, lived yet fifty years, and died at the good old age of one hundred and seventy-five.

And Laughter and Beauty had two sons, both of whom became men of renown. One of them lived the life of a roving chieftain in the land that borders the great Arabian desert. His name was Esau, but he was often called Edom, or the Red, on account of his ruddy complexion and the color of his hair; and he gave his name to the narrow sea that lies between Arabia and the Land of the Nile. The other son of Laughter and Beauty was a shrewd man, always skillful in trade, and sure to get the better of every bargain. After deceiving his father and greatly wronging his brother, he fled, while still quite young, to his mother's people in the little city by the Euphrates. There he married; and there, by his energy as well as by his craftiness, he became very rich in sheep and cattle and camels and silver. Afterwards, when he heard that his father was still alive, and ready to forgive him, he returned with his family and his servants, and his flocks and herds, to the western land where he had been born. There he was reconciled with his brother, and there he won by his uprightness and valor the noble name of Israel, which in his own language meant the Prince.

In that same language the word for laughter was Isaac, and the word for beauty was Rebecca.



THE MASTER OF THE LAND OF THE NILE.

I. THE DREAMER.

THERE dwelt in Hebron, at the foot of one of the grass-covered hills, a rich man, who had gained a part of his wealth by his shrewdness in trade and by dealing unfairly with his brother. In his younger days people had called him Supplanter (or, in their own language, Jacob), because of his grasping nature, which seemed to have belonged to him even from his birth. Later in life, however, he had become a much better man, and, because of his uprightness and valor, he had gained for himself the title of the Prince (or, in his own tongue, Israel). When, in his old age, he settled at Hebron, he was, as I have said, very rich. He had hundreds and hundreds of sheep and cattle, besides droves of camels and donkeys; and he had twelve sons.

TEN of his sons were grown-up men, bearded and tall and strong; but the youngest was a little babe, and the next to the youngest was a slender lad still

in his teens. The Prince loved this lad more than all the rest of his children, perhaps because he was gentle and wise, perhaps because he was the son of his favorite wife, and had been born to him in his old age. The older brothers said that the lad was their father's pet, and they began to hate him, and seldom spoke kindly to him.

"What do you think I dreamed last night?" said the lad one day when they were all in the field together.

"How do we know?" they said. "Why should we care anything for your silly dreams?"

"Well, I had a very strange dream," he said. "I dreamed that we were in the harvest field, and that each one of us had bound up a sheaf of grain. Then my sheaf stood up in its place, and every one of your sheaves bowed and fell down to the ground before it."

"What do you mean?" said his brothers. "Do you mean to say that we shall all bow down to you some time? We'll see about that."

The next day, when the Prince and his sons were sitting in the shade of the tent, the lad said,—

"I had another dream last night."

"You'd better not tell it," said the eldest brother.

"But I will tell it," said the lad. "I dreamed that I was a bright star in the sky, and that the sun

and the moon and eleven stars bowed down and fell on their faces before me."

"Worse and worse!" cried the young men. "Yesterday you had your brothers falling in the dust at your feet. Now you want to make believe that your father and mother will also humble themselves before you."

"I did not say so," said the lad.

"But you meant it," said they. "Who is the sun if it is not our father? and who is the moon if it is not our mother? and who are the eleven stars of your dream if they are not your brothers?"

"I never thought of my dream in that way," said the lad.

But his brothers were all very angry; and his father for the first time in his life scolded him sharply. The lad burst into tears, and ran to hide himself behind the curtains of the tent.

After that the young men hated him all the more, and they nicknamed him the Dreamer. But his father the Prince seemed to love him even better than before.

II. THE JOURNEY.

That summer there was but little rain, and the ground was so dry that the grass could not grow. The fields were no longer green, and the beautiful

hills of Hebron were brown and bare as a desert. There was not enough pasture there to keep the herds and flocks alive.

At last the Prince sent his servants away with the cattle to find some greener spot in the river valleys far to the north. As for the poor sheep and lambs, the ten sons undertook to drive them to the plains of Shechem, fifty miles away. They had spent a summer at Shechem once before, and had done some wild and wicked deeds there. They had even destroyed the little town that stood in the midst of the fields, and had killed some of the people; and they knew that now the place was deserted, and that no one would dispute their right to pasture their flocks there. They remembered that there were many springs of water in the fields, and they felt sure that they would find plenty of grass.

After the men had gone away with the sheep and cattle, it was very lonely in Hebron. Day after day passed by, and it was always the same,—the camels and donkeys browsing among the thistles and shrubs on the hillsides, the women at work in the tents, the children playing the same games in the dust and sand, and the hot sun hanging high in the sky. Once a caravan, or company of merchants, passed by, with a long line of camels and

armed men, carrying goods of all kinds, cloths and spices and gold, from the far East down into the rich country of the Nile. Ah, what a great event that was! Everybody went out to see the wonderful caravan and the wonderful things that were with it; and the Prince bought many handsome and curious things for his wives and their servants and the children.

But after that, the place seemed lonelier than before, and still no word came from the ten men who had gone down to the fields of Shechem.

One day the Prince said to the lad, —

“I wonder how the boys are getting along with the sheep, and whether they found the pastures as green and fresh as they expected! I wish I had a trusty man that I could spare. I would send him down to Shechem to find your brothers, and see whether all is well with them.”

“Let me go, father!” said the boy.

“What!” cried the old man. “Do you think that I would send you on an errand so far, and alone? You are only a boy, and you do not know what dangers you might meet with between here and Shechem. Wild beasts roam in the woods and among the hills, and Arab robbers ride over the plains.”

“Surely you don’t think I am afraid!” said the lad. “Haven’t you often told me of the long

journey which you made when you were a boy no older than I am,—how you went all alone across the great plains to the far-off land of the Euphrates? And do you think that I ought to be afraid to take this little trip down to Shechem?”

“I know you are not afraid,” said his father, “and I do you a wrong to be afraid for you. So get yourself ready, and set out this very day. See whether your brothers are well, and whether the sheep have found good pasture, and then come home and tell me.”

It did not take the boy long to get ready for the journey. All that he needed to carry was a little leathern pouch with food in it for three days, a leathern bottle full of water, and a pair of light sandals, which he would slip on his feet when he had to cross rough and stony places among the hills.

“You may leave your old cloak,” said his father. “This is your birthday, and I have a present for you.”

Then he opened a chest and took from it the most beautiful coat that the boy had ever seen. The Prince had bought it of one of the merchants who had passed with the caravan; and it had been woven in a strange land in the far-distant East.

“O father!” cried the boy. “Is the pretty coat for me? And may I wear it to Shechem?”

“Certainly it is for you,” said his father; and he threw the rich garment upon the boy’s shoulders, and fastened it at the neck with a silver clasp. It was richly woven of silk and linen, with threads of crimson and purple and gold running through it from top to bottom. At the waist it was held in by a belt of finest leather buckled with a silver buckle; and the soft, many-colored folds fell almost to the boy’s knees.

“O father, how beautiful it is, and how kind you are!” he said, and the tears came into his eyes for joy.

Then he kissed his father and his baby brother, and waved a good-by to the women and children who had come out of the tents to admire his coat and see him start on his journey. His mother was not among them. She had died a year before, and her grave was by the roadside in lonely Ephrath, far over the hills to the north.

“Do not fear for me, father,” he said; and he walked briskly away across the brown and barren fields.

“May the God of my father and of my father’s father bless thee and keep thee!” said the Prince; and he stood and watched the boy until he had passed over the ridge of a distant hill and could be seen no more.

III. THE DRY WELL.

It was a long and hard journey over the hills and across the lonely plains. On the third day, about noon, the lad reached the place where he expected to find his brothers. There were the springs of running water and the fields which he well knew, and on the hillock in their midst were the ruins of the little town of Shechem; but the place was deserted and bare, although there were plenty of signs that there had been sheep and shepherds there.

He ran from one field to another, looking and calling; but no one answered him, and there was not a man to be seen anywhere. At last, footsore and tired and hungry, he sat down on a stone and wondered what he should do next. He could not think of going back home and telling his father that his brothers and the sheep were nowhere to be found. While he was sitting there, a man came out from among the ruins on the hilltop and called to him.

“What do you want here, my lad?” he said.

“I have come to find my brothers and the sheep,” he answered; “for my father is troubled about them, and wants very much to learn how they are getting on.”

Then the man told him that the ten brothers, who



called themselves the sons of the Prince, had been around Shechem nearly all summer, but that they had gone away only three days before, to look for fresh pastures for their sheep.

“I think they must have gone over the hills to Dothan,” said the man; “for I heard them say to one another, ‘Let us go up to Dothan;’ and I know the grass is better there than here.”

The lad had never been to Dothan, but the man told him it was not far, and showed him the shortest and best way to go; and when he had eaten his last crumb of bread, and filled his bottle with cool water from one of the springs, he went on over the hills as fast as his tired feet would carry him.

Late that afternoon the ten brothers were lounging among the grass on the top of a little knoll, and watching their sheep which were feeding in the fields below. Suddenly one of them, who was called Troop, and who was sharper-sighted than the rest, sprang to his feet.

“Who is that coming up the road from Shechem?” he cried.

The other men jumped up quickly, and looked towards the place which Troop pointed out. Far away across the fields they could see some one coming. They watched him as he drew nearer and nearer.

“He walks as if in great haste,” said the eldest of the ten, shading his eyes with his hands. “He is some poor fellow who has lost his way, and is coming to us for help.”

“Poor fellow, indeed!” said Troop. “He is some rich merchant’s son who has strayed from a caravan; for only see what a fine cloak he wears!”

“Yes,” said a tall, lank fellow whom they called Judge. “That cloak is worth more than a hundred sheep, and I mean to have it for my own.” He grasped his sheephook in his hands, and was half-way down the hill when his brothers called to him.

“Stay!” they cried. “It is nobody but our wise brother, the Dreamer.”

“What! father’s pet?” said Judge; and he went slowly back.

By this time the boy could be plainly seen making his way across the fields, and waving his hand to his brothers by way of greeting.

“Only see that fine coat, how it gleams and sparkles in the rays of the sun!” said Troop.

“Father must have paid a goodly sum for that rich garment,” said another of the brothers.

“Yes,” said Judge, “and we who take care of the sheep have hardly a coat to our backs.”

“The young fellow will set himself up for king now, without doubt,” said the youngest of the ten.

“Get yourselves ready, boys, to fall on your knees before him as soon as he comes to the foot of the hill!”

“For my part,” said Troop, “I think we have had enough of his dreams and his nonsense. I wish something would happen to him before he gets back to Hebron.”

“We might make something happen,” muttered Judge. “Father would never know: he would think that a lion had caught the boy while he was crossing the hills.”

Then they talked together in low tones. But the eldest of the ten said, “Have a care, boys! If we should hurt the lad, we could never look our father in the face again. But we might put him into the dry well down there, and leave him.”

This speech seemed to please the others; and Troop ran down and lifted the flat stone that covered the mouth of the well, and looked in. But the eldest brother turned, and walked away.

It was not long until the boy was near enough to make himself heard.

“Hail, my brothers!” he cried. “Is it well with you? I bring you our father’s blessing.”

But the nine rude fellows looked at him with dark and scowling glances, and made no answer to his kind greeting.

“Don’t you know me?” he said. “Don’t you know your younger brother? I have come all the way from Hebron to see you; for father was troubled about you, and wanted to know how you are getting on.”

“You are no brother of ours,” said Judge. “We never saw you before.”

“You are a spy from our enemies, the robber Arabs,” said Troop. “You have come to see how strong we are; and you will go back and tell your friends whether they can overcome us and drive away our flocks. But you shall not escape us!” And with that he threw a stone at the boy, while the others ran down the hill, brandishing their sheephooks, and crying out in a savage and threatening manner.

“Oh, my brothers, my brothers!” cried the lad, stopping, and lifting up his hands.

They seized him rudely, and tore his beautiful coat from his back, and snatched the sandals from his feet.

“Away with the robber!” cried Judge.

“Yes, away with the spy!” cried the others; and they pushed him roughly along towards the open well. The boy covered his face with his hands, and sobbed.

“Stand back! Don’t hurt the lad!” said one

of them, a big round-faced fellow whom his mother called Judah, or Praise. "Leave him to me." And he lifted the boy by the arms, and let him gently down into the well. It was not a deep well, and he did not have far to drop; but its stone sides were smooth and steep, and not even a squirrel could have climbed out of it.

When the brothers saw what was done, they turned away as if ashamed, and without saying a word went after their sheep. But Judge staid behind to put the flat stone back into its place, and, as he peeped down into the well, he whispered, —

"This is the way that we bow down before you, Dreamer!"

IV. THE CARAVAN.

That evening nine of the brothers sat in front of their tent, eating their supper in silence. The eldest was not with them. He had gone across the fields to look for a lost lamb, and to think of some plan to befriend his young brother. While they were eating, a long line of camels and men was seen coming across the plain. It was a caravan of traders journeying from the East towards the country of the Nile. The sun had gone down, but the moon was at its full; and in that country there



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SOLD HIM TO THE MERCHANTS FOR TWENTY PIECES OF SILVER.

was no pleasanter time to travel than in the cool of the evening.

The brothers sat still and watched the caravan as it came slowly towards them. The camels were loaded with spices and myrrh and balm, and other precious things; and, with the armed guard which walked before them, there were a number of young men who were being taken to the Nile country as slaves.

“If we only had something to sell to those merchants,” said Praise, “we might make a good bargain.”

“We might sell them a sheep or two for their breakfast,” said Judge.

“It seems to me,” said Praise, “that we have done a very foolish thing. We have put the boy into the well, where he will die, and not one of us has made any money by it. Come, now, let us sell him to these merchants, and save his life! We shall then be rid of him, and at the same time make some profit for ourselves.”

This speech pleased the brothers very much. Judge ran and lifted the lad out of the well; and Praise, who was good at making bargains, sold him to the merchants for twenty pieces of silver.

“Two pieces for each of you, and four for me,” he said.

“But how about our eldest brother, who is looking for the lamb?” asked one.

“There is no need for him to know what we have done,” said Praise.

By and by the eldest brother came back from his search, and went at once to the well. He lifted the stone and called to the boy, but there was no answer. Then he lighted a torch, and held it so that he could see to the bottom of the well. There was no boy there. He dropped the stone back into its place, and ran towards the tents, tearing his clothes into pieces as he went.

“The child is not!” he cried. “The child is not, and what shall become of me?”

“Some evil spirit has stolen him away,” said Judge, “and what shall we say to father?”

“Yes, what shall we say to father?” said Praise.

Then they took the boy’s coat which they had torn from his back, and dipped it into the blood of a kid which they had killed; and Praise, who was the best talker among them, carried it to their father in Hebron.

“Here is something that we found in the hill country on the other side of Shechem,” he said.

The old man looked at it, and knew at once that it was the costly coat which he had given to his best-loved child.

“It is my son’s coat!” he cried. “Some wild beast has done this, and has devoured the child!” And he tore his cloak into shreds in sign of grief, and clothed himself in sackcloth, and sat down and mourned for the boy many days. Then his sons came home with their sheep, and they and all his daughters tried to comfort him; but he would not listen to them. “I will weep for the child until I die,” he said.

But as for the lad himself, the merchants took him down into the country of the Nile; and he was so bright-witted and quick, and withal so handsome and obedient, that the captain of the King’s body-guard was glad to buy him at a very high price.

“What is your name?” asked his master.

“My mother called me Joseph,” said the boy; “but my brothers, who sold me to the merchants, nicknamed me the Dreamer.”

V. THE PRISON.

Although he was a slave in a strange land, the boy did not lose heart, nor did he spend any time in grieving about things which could not be helped. He made up his mind to do his best at all times, no matter what might happen to him. And so, as the years passed by and he grew up to manhood,

he proved himself to be so honest and wise, that his master trusted him with everything that he had, and at last made him the manager of all his lands and houses and goods.

“My servant Joseph,” said the captain, “is the best man of business in this country. I do not need to think of anything; for he manages all, and there is nothing which he undertakes that does not prosper.”

But the time came when misfortune again befell the young man. The captain’s wife, who was a thoughtless, wicked woman, accused him of things of which he was not guilty, and caused him to be thrown into the King’s prison. Yet even then he did not lose hope. He was so kind and wise and trustworthy, that the jailer soon made him his chief helper. All the other prisoners were under his care, and nothing was done in the place except as he ordered it. Yet he was not allowed to step outside of the prison doors.

It so happened that about this time two men, the King’s butler and the King’s baker, were shut up in the jail for some fault or crime. Both of them were very much troubled because of their disgrace, and one night both of them dreamed strange dreams. In the morning Joseph noticed that they seemed very sad.

“What is the matter,” he asked, “that on this bright day your faces are so gloomy and down-cast?”

“I have dreamed a dream,” said the butler, “and I do not know what it means.”

“Tell it to me,” said the young man, “and perhaps I can explain its meaning.”

“In my dream,” said the butler, “I saw a vine with three branches; and as I looked at it, it began to bud and blossom, and soon it was full of ripe grapes. Then I gathered the grapes, and pressed the juice of them into the King’s cup, and carried it to the King.”

“That is an easy dream to explain,” said Joseph. “The three branches are three days; and in three days the King will set you free, and you shall be his butler again, and carry his wine to him as you have done before. But I pray you, when it is well with you, do not forget me; for I am a slave, and was stolen from my father in Hebron when I was a boy, and I have done nothing that they should keep me in this place.”

Then the King’s baker said, “I, too, have dreamed a dream, and I hope that it is as good a dream as my friend the butler’s.”

“Tell it to me,” said Joseph.

“I dreamed,” said the baker, “that I had three

white baskets on my head, and that in the upper basket were all kinds of cakes and sweetmeats for the King. But as I walked along, the birds flew down from the trees and ate up all the sweetmeats, and I had none to carry to the King.”

Joseph shook his head, and said, —

“That is also an easy dream to explain. The three baskets are three days; and in three days you shall be hanged on a tree, and the birds shall fly down and eat the flesh from your body.”

Three days after that, all things happened as the young man had foretold. It was the King's birthday, and he made a great feast in his palace; and he gave orders that the baker should be hanged upon a tree, and that the butler should be set free and given the place of honor which he had held before. But the butler was so glad because of his good fortune, that he did not think of what Joseph had told him.

VI. THE DREAMS.

One morning about two years after that, the King, or Pharaoh, as he was called by his own people, awoke in great distress. He had had two dreams in the night which troubled him very much, and, do what he would, he could not put the thought

of them out of his mind. In those days, people believed that all dreams had a meaning, and that they foreboded something that was going to happen in the time to come. All day long the King pondered upon his two dreams, and he could take no pleasure in anything. The next night he could not sleep; but, whenever he closed his eyes, the dreams came back to him.

On the second morning he sent for his wise men, and said, —

“ I have had two strange dreams, and they trouble me greatly. In the first dream I thought I was standing on the banks of the Nile, and looking at the water as it flowed among the reeds. Then I saw seven fat cattle come up out of the river; and they went into the meadow, and fed upon the long grass. But while I was looking at them, and thinking how beautiful they were, seven other cattle came creeping out of the mud and mire of the river. They were the leanest cattle that were ever seen, and they were so weak that they could hardly stand. But they clambered upon the bank; and, as soon as they saw the fat cattle in the meadow, they ran after them with wide-open mouths, and caught them, and swallowed every one of them. It was a very strange and impossible thing, and I cannot understand how they could do it; and, stranger still, they

were not any fatter after this meal than they had been before. But while I was looking at them, I awoke."

The wise men looked very grave, and shook their heads.

"It was a strange vision, O King!" they said; "but tell us now of your second dream."

"The second was so nearly like the first," said the King, "that I am quite sure it means the same thing. I dreamed that I stood on the bank of the Nile again; and I was looking, not towards the river, but at the great wheat fields where the grain was almost ready for the reapers. Then I saw a tall stalk of wheat that had grown up by my side, and on it were seven ears of golden grain, the largest and fairest that ever grew in any land. But while I looked, seven other ears came out on the same stalk. They were thin, blasted ears, with scarcely a single good grain in them all; and when the east wind blew upon them, they fell upon the fine, large ears, and ate them up. And while I wondered how such a thing could be, I awoke."

The wise men looked very grave, and shook their heads, and said nothing.

"I have now told you my dreams," said the King, "and it is for you to tell me what they mean."

“O King!” they said, “these dreams seem very hard to explain. Allow us, we pray you, to think upon them until to-morrow, and then we will give you an answer.”

But on the morrow they were as far from understanding the dreams as ever.

“We cannot explain them,” they said.

Then the King’s butler said, “O King! I have in mind now a thing that happened two years ago, when I was in prison. Your baker and myself were in prison at the same time, as you no doubt remember, and we both dreamed dreams on the same night. It so happened that we told our dreams to the young man who was our keeper, — the same man who once managed the estates of the captain of your guard. He listened to us, and then explained the dreams; and everything came to pass just as he told us it would, — I was allowed to come back to my place, and the baker was hanged.”

“Go at once, and bring the young man to me,” said the King.

The butler made haste and brought Joseph out of the prison; and when the young man had taken a bath and shaved himself, and put on his best clothes, he was led before the King. The King was pleased as soon as he saw him, he was so tall and handsome, and his face was so bright and cheer-

ful. Among all the men in the land, there was not another one whose looks were so noble.

“I have had two strange dreams,” he said, “and the wisest men in my kingdom cannot explain them. I am told that you understand such things, and I have sent for you to tell me what they mean.”

“The God of my father will help me to explain them,” said Joseph; “but I myself know nothing at all.”

When the King had told him his dreams, he stood still for a moment, thinking. Then he said, —

“Both dreams mean the same thing. The God of my father has sent them to you, that you might know the things which are about to happen in the Land of the Nile. The seven fat cattle and the seven big ears of wheat mean seven years of plenty. The seven lean cattle and the seven blasted ears of wheat mean seven years of famine. The meaning of the dreams is this: there will be seven years of great plenty in all the land; and after that there will be seven years when nothing can be raised, and during these years of famine all the former plenty will be eaten up.”

“How soon will these things happen?” asked the King.

“The thing was shown to you in two dreams on the same night, O King!” said the young man; “and

that is a sign that the time is here now, and that the years of plenty are about to begin. Now, if some wise man could be found to take charge of the matter, it would not be hard to provide against the years of famine that will follow. Great granaries might be built in all the cities, and the surplus grain might be stored away for use in time of need."

Then the King turned to the officers who stood around him, and said, "The young man speaks well, and there may be much truth in what he says. At any rate, it will do no harm to store away the grain during these years of plenty, and it will certainly do great good if the years of dearth should ever come. Tell me, now, which man in all my kingdom is the most trustworthy, and the best fitted to manage this business."

"If it please the King," said one of the officers, "the young man who once had charge of the estates of the captain of your guard is the most honest and the best manager in all our land. Never did anything prosper as did the captain's affairs while that young man looked after them."

"Let the young man be brought before me at once," said the King.

"He is already here, O King!" said the officer. "It is he that has just now explained your dreams."

Then the King turned to Joseph, and said, "Truly, I believe that there is no man in the world so discreet and wise as you are, for I often heard of you while you were the head servant of the captain of my guard. Your name is already known in all parts of my kingdom. You shall manage this business, and I will set you over all the land to rule my people."

And he took a ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's finger, and hung a gold chain about the young man's neck, and gave him rich robes of finest linen to put on.

"Why do men call you Joseph?" he asked; "for that is a word which means 'He shall add.'"

"When I was born," answered the young man, "my dear mother said that I was a promise that the God of my father would add more and more to her happiness. But she lies now in her lonely grave by the roadside in far-away Ephrath, and my father's three wives keep his tents."

"Enough, enough!" cried the King. "And now, if you have told me truly, and will manage this business aright, you shall be given a new name. You shall be called Zaphnath-paaneah, or the Master of the Land." And then, turning to the officers around him, he said, "I am Pharaoh, I am the King; but this man is Zaphnath-paaneah, and he shall stand

next to me in all things. His word shall be law, and, without his leave, no man shall do anything at all. He is the Master of the Land of the Nile."

VII. THE TEN STRANGERS.

In all the world there had never been such crops as those that were raised during the next seven years. There was so much wheat that the number of bushels could not be counted; and all other kinds of food were so plentiful that no one had ever any need to be hungry. And during that time of plenty no one was so busy as the Master of the Land of the Nile. He was first in this city, then in that, giving orders about the great granaries that were being built, and seeing that they were filled with grain. His word was law everywhere; and no man dared to waste anything, but all the food that was not needed was laid up in storehouses against the time of need.

But when the seven years of plenty had passed, the seven years of dearth began to come, and everything was changed. The ground was so dry, and the air was so hot, that nothing would grow. In all the valley of the Nile there was not a stalk of wheat nor a blade of green grass. In the lands farther away, things were in even a worse plight:

for there the people had not laid up anything when there was plenty; and so the flocks and herds died for want of pasture, and thousands of men and women and children perished because there was no food. But in the country of the Nile the store-houses were full, and the rich men of other lands sent there to buy grain.

One day, when the Master of the Land was selling wheat at one of the King's granaries, ten rough-looking strangers were brought before him. They were sunburned and brown with traveling over the sandy deserts, and they said that they had come a long distance from the east. As soon as they saw the Master of the Land, dressed in his robes of fine linen, and wearing the King's gold chain about his neck, they bowed themselves, and fell on their faces before him.

"Who are you?" he said. "Where do you come from? What do you want?"

He spoke so harshly, that they trembled with fear, and did not dare to look up. Then one of them answered.

"O mighty Prince!" he said, "we are from Hebron, a place many days' journey from here; and we have come to buy food for our families, for in our own land there is nothing to eat."

"Do not try to deceive me," said the Master.

"I know who you are. You are spies; and you have come to find out all that you can about us, and then go and tell it to our enemies."

"Oh, do not think such a thing of us!" they cried; and they were filled with greater dread than before, and did not know what to do. "We are not spies, but honest men, and true, and we are all brothers of one family."

"Have you a father or a brother at home?" asked the Master.

"Truly, there were twelve of us," was the answer; "and our father, who is an old man, is at home with the youngest brother, who is still a little child. The other brother is dead; and this child is left alone with our father, who loves him most dearly."

Then the Master seemed to be more angry than before. "You shall prove that you are not spies. One of you shall go and fetch this child of whom you tell me, and the other nine shall lie in jail until he comes."

"My lord!" cried the spokesman of the ten strangers, "the lad cannot leave his father; for, if we should fetch him away, his father would die."

"Did I not say that you were spies?" said the Master; and then, without waiting for another word, he bade his officers lead the ten men away to prison.

Three days after that, he had them brought before him again.

“I have not the heart to treat you cruelly,” he said. “If you are honest men, let one of you be bound in prison; and do the rest of you go home with food for the hungry ones who are there. Then come again, and bring your little brother, and I will believe you, and you shall not die.”

And he walked away, and hid his face, and wept.

Then the officers took one of the brothers and bound him, and led him away to the prison. The others were set free. They bought as much grain as their donkeys could carry, and then started sadly and silently on their long journey home.

VIII. THE LITTLE BROTHER.

When the nine brothers reached Hebron, the women and the children ran to meet them, and the old Prince stood in the door of his tent to welcome them home. But when they told how the other brother had been left behind, sadness took the place of joy.

“Why did you leave him?” asked the Prince.

“The man who is the Master of the Land kept him,” said Praise. “He spoke roughly to us, and threw us into prison as spies. Then he set nine of

us free, but the tenth he kept bound. 'Bring your youngest brother to me,' he said; 'and then I will know that you are not spies, and you may all go in peace.'"

Then the Prince sat down in his tent and wept. "All the world is against me!" he cried. "Two of my sons are lost, and now you would take Benoni away. But he shall not go with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If mischief should befall him, then you will bring me down in sorrow to the grave."

The men unloaded their donkeys, and began to empty the grain which they had brought. But, wonder of wonders! in each man's sack was the money which he had paid for the wheat. And they were greatly troubled, and did not know what to do; for would not the man who was the Master of the Nile country accuse them of stealing it?

Days and weeks went by, and the famine grew worse and worse. The grain which the brothers had brought was almost gone.

"Boys," said their father, "you will have to go again and buy a little more grain."

"It is no use, unless you will let Benoni go with us," they answered; "for the man said that he would not listen to us again unless we brought him."

But the old man wept, and declared that he would not part with the boy.

Then Praise asked him, "Which is better,— that all your children and grandchildren should perish here with hunger, or that we take the risk with the young lad? I will answer with my life that he shall come back safe."

At last the Prince agreed to let the child go.

"Carry a little present down to the man," he said. "We have not much that will please him; but take him a little balm and a little honey, and some spices and nuts, and carry back the money that you found in your sacks. There must have been some mistake about it. Then, when he sees your little brother, it may be that the great man will deal kindly with you."

The brothers did as he told them, and, taking their presents and the young lad with them, they went down again into the Land of the Nile.

When the Master of the Land heard that they had come, he ordered that they should be brought to his own palace. This frightened them very much, for they thought that now he would throw them into prison or put them to death for carrying the money home in their sacks. When they were led into the room where he sat, they bowed very low before him, and gave him the presents which their father had

sent; but how poor and little did these presents seem in the midst of so much grandeur!

“Is your father well, the old man of whom you told me?” asked the great man. “Is he still alive?”

“Our father is still alive, and he is well,” they answered; and they again bowed themselves to the ground.

Then the great man saw the young lad, his own brother, standing trembling before him.

“Is this your younger brother, about whom you told me?” he asked.

“This is he,” they answered.

“May the God of your father be ever kind to you, my lad!” said he; and he turned away, and went into his own room and wept.

IX. THE DISCOVERY.

That very afternoon the sons of the Prince made ready to go back to Hebron. They were glad-hearted now; for the man who was the Master of the Land had been kind to them, and had believed them, and had set free their brother who had been in prison. They hastened to the storehouse, and bought as much grain as their donkeys could carry; and, as soon as it was light the next morning, they started.

But they were hardly outside of the city, when they heard loud cries behind them; and, looking back, they saw men on horseback riding rapidly towards them. They stopped, and waited to see what was wanted. The men rode up. One of them was the head servant of the Master of the Land.

“What mean you by robbing my master of his treasures?” he cried.

“Oh, say not so, my lord!” said Praise, trembling. “Did we not bring the money back that we found in our sacks? How could we steal silver or gold from your master? If any one of us has taken that which is not his own, let him die, and the rest of us will be your master’s slaves.”

“What is it that we have stolen?” cried Judge. “Search us, and see if we have anything of your master’s.”

“That I will do,” said the head servant. “And the one with whom it is found shall be my master’s slave, but the rest of you shall go free.”

So they took the sacks from off the backs of the donkeys, and every man opened his sack. Then the head servant searched in each sack, beginning with that of the eldest; and in the young lad’s sack he found a silver cup of great price, which belonged to the Master of the Land. When the brothers saw this, they tore their cloaks in sign of grief and

dismay; and then every man loaded his donkey again, and, without saying a word, followed the head servant back into the city. They did not know that the Master himself had caused the cup to be hidden there.

The great man met them at his own door, and spoke to them very harshly. "What is this you have done?" he said. "Did you not know that nothing can be hidden from me?"

"We cannot excuse ourselves," said Praise. "The case is a clear one, and there is nothing to say. We are your slaves, and so also is the lad who took the cup."

"Not so," answered the Master. "The rest of you shall go free; but the lad who had the cup, he shall be my slave."

Then Praise pleaded with the great man to spare the boy.

"The lad is the joy and hope of our father," he said; "and the old man's life is bound up in the life of the child. If we should go home, and our father see that the lad is not with us, he will die, and we shall bring down his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. Now, I pray you, let me be your slave, and let the lad go up to Hebron with his brothers!"

Then the great man could keep his secret no longer. He ordered his officers to leave him alone

with the men from Hebron, and then he made himself known.

“I am your brother,” he said. “I am Joseph, whom you sold to the Arab merchants when I was a lad. Do not think I am angry with you, for it has all happened for the best. The God of our father, he brought it about in order to save life; for otherwise we should all have perished in this great famine.”

Then he fell upon his little brother's neck and kissed him; and they both wept together for a long time. After that, he kissed his older brothers, and wept with them, and talked with them about the wonderful things which had happened to him.

“And now,” said he, “hasten back to the old home in Hebron, and say to our father that his son Joseph is still alive, and is the master of all the Land of the Nile. Bid him come down to me at once, and say that he shall live near me with his children, and his children's children, and his flocks and his herds; and I will provide for you all.”

Then he gave fine coats to each of the men; but to his young brother he gave five suits of the richest clothing, and three hundred pieces of silver; and to his father he sent twenty donkeys laden with grain and bread and meat, and the good things of the land. He sent also a great number of wagons to bring him and the women and the

children down into the Land of the Nile. And his brothers, with glad hearts, hastened to do all things as he directed.

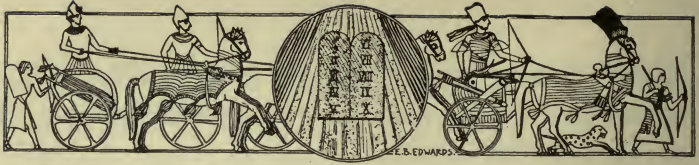
When at last the aged Prince, with all his family, came down into the country of the Nile, the King allowed the Master to give his father and his brothers homes in the best part of the land, where they could dwell in peace, and care for their flocks and herds. The King himself went out to meet the Prince, and the Prince blessed him.

“How old are you?” asked the King.

“The days of the years of my pilgrimage,” answered the old man, “are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.”

And the Prince and his children, and his children's children, made themselves homes in that part of the Land of the Nile which was called Goshen.





THE GREAT LAWGIVER.

I. THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

THERE once lived in the Land of the Nile a nation of bondmen.

These people had not always been slaves. They said that the great ancestor from whom they were all descended, had been a man of renown in his day, and had won for himself the title of Israel, or the Prince; and so they called themselves Israelites, or the Children of the Prince. They liked to tell of the time when the Prince had come down into the country from a foreign land, and with his children, and his children's children, had settled in the fertile valley of Goshen. And they proudly remembered the fact that one of the Prince's sons had been the Master of the Land of the Nile, and second only to the King; and they delighted to tell how this great man had been wont to ride in his chariot from city to city, and how all the people bowed the knee before him, and made his word their law.

But now four hundred years had passed since that glorious time, and many sad changes had come to the Children of the Prince. Their lands had been taken from them, they had been robbed of their flocks and herds, and cruel laws had been made in order to afflict them; and yet they had seemed to prosper, and their numbers had grown until there were tens of thousands of them in Goshen. At last there came to the throne a Pharaoh, or King, who had never heard of their great ancestor, but whose heart was filled with hatred towards them.

“What shall we do with the folk who call themselves the Children of the Prince?” he said. “If we let them alone, they will soon outnumber us, and will make themselves our masters. They are good workmen and cunning traders, and it would be a loss to the country to destroy them; and yet something must be done to hold them in check.”

And so laws were passed which made the Children of the Prince a nation of slaves; and Pharaoh sent their young men into the cities and towns to work under taskmasters, and build walls and forts and palaces of brick and stone. It was also ordered that every boy baby that was born to any of these people should be put to death. In this way the cruel King hoped to put an end to their increase,

and at the same time strengthen his kingdom and enrich himself.

One day, not long after this, it happened that the King's daughter went out with her maidens to bathe in the river. As she was walking along the bank, she saw something floating among the reeds in the shallow water of the stream, and she sent one of her maidens to get it. When it was brought to her, it proved to be a light basket made of rushes woven together, and daubed with pitch so as to make it water-tight and strong. The King's daughter opened the lid of the basket, and looked in; and there she saw a pretty babe, about three months old, lying on a little cushion of leaves. When the child saw the lady, he held out his hands towards her and cried; and her kind heart was filled with pity, and she bent over and kissed him.

"He must belong to one of the slaves who call themselves Children of the Prince," she said. "How sad that so pretty a babe should perish!"

While the King's daughter and her maidens were fondling the child, and trying to make him cease his weeping, a little girl came timidly forward, and listened to what they were saying.

"How I should like to keep him for my own!" said the lady, as she took him from the basket and held him lovingly in her arms.

AND THERE SHE SAW A PRETTY BABE.



Then the little girl took courage, and spoke.

“Shall I go and find a woman to nurse the child for you?” she asked.

“Yes, go,” said the lady.

Now, the little girl was none other than the sister of the babe. Ever since the basket had been set afloat among the reeds, she had been standing by the river, watching, and hoping that this very thing would happen; for, if the lady would take pity on the child, his life might be saved. She ran as fast as she could, and told her mother all that the King’s daughter had said. Then her mother hastened with glad heart to the riverside, where the King’s daughter and her maidens were still fondling the child; for now he had ceased his crying, and was playing with the lady’s necklace, and cooing softly to his new-found friends.

“Here is a woman who will nurse the child for you,” said the little girl.

“Come, then,” said the lady to the child’s mother, “come into my home and take care of this babe for me, and I will pay you well.”

And so the babe was taken into the King’s palace, and brought up by his own mother. He was called the son of the King’s daughter; and she gave him the name of Moses, which meant that he had been drawn out of the water.

II. THE SHEPHERD.

The child grew fast, and soon became a handsome lad, quick and strong, and full of promise. He was treated in every way as though he were really the grandson of the King. The wisest men in the land were sought out to be his teachers, and he became learned in all the lore of those ancient times: for they taught him whatever was known about the world and its people, and about the laws and customs of the land; they taught him how to be a brave soldier, and how to be a leader of men; they instructed him in music and in magic, and in the science of the stars; and they told him about the idols whom the people ignorantly worshiped, and about the great God, the ruler of all things. No young man ever had brighter prospects than he; for it was the wish, both of the King and of the King's daughter, that he should in the end become a great ruler in the land, and that he should stand next in power to the King himself. But his own mother, the humble nurse who cared for him in his childhood, had taught him something else. It was she who told him of his kinsmen, and how they had lived for now four hundred years in the land, and how they had been robbed and oppressed

and enslaved, and how in every city and town his brethren were being lashed and driven by cruel taskmasters. And she told him about the great ancestor of his people, the Prince,—how he had come as a stranger and settled in the valley of Goshen; and how before he died he had told his sons that they should not always stay in the Nile country, but that somewhere there was a land flowing with milk and honey which the great God whom they revered had promised to them and their descendants as a heritage and a home so long as the world should last. These words sank deep into the heart of the lad, deeper by far than all the lore he had learned from his teachers; and the older he grew, the more he yearned towards his kinsfolk, and the more he longed to help them escape from their grievous burdens.

One day, after he had become a grown-up man, Moses was walking in the fields where some of his people were toiling; and in a lonely spot he saw one of the King's taskmasters beating a man. He looked this way and that, and, when he saw that no one was near, he killed the taskmaster, and hid his body in the sand. The next day he was walking near the same place, and there he saw two of his own people fighting.

“For shame!” he cried. “Why do you do so

wrong a thing as to quarrel with each other?" And he ran and tried to part them.

"Who made you a judge over us?" said one of the men. "Do you want to kill me as you killed the taskmaster yesterday?"

When the young man heard this, he was frightened.

"Surely the thing is known," he said to himself; "but how did any one find it out?"

Then, without saying another word, he turned, and fled from the place. He knew that the laws of the land were very strict, and that, if it should be proven that he had killed the taskmaster, he would be punished, perhaps with death. He dared not stop even to say good-by to his friends. There was no safety for him anywhere in the Land of the Nile; and so he fled into the far wilderness country where there were no cities, nor towns, nor settled homes, but only wandering bands of Arabs and a few keepers of sheep.

One afternoon he came to a well in the midst of a grove of palm trees, and sat down in the shade to rest. On the grassy plain not far away there were many flocks of sheep feeding, and the tops of white tents could be seen among the hills beyond. The young man was tired with his long wanderings, and he was in no haste to leave a spot that seemed so

quiet and peaceful and safe. He had not been there long, however, when he heard the tinkle of bells and the sound of pleasant voices ; and, peering out from his place, he saw seven handsome young girls driving a flock of sheep towards the well.

“ Make haste, sisters,” said one of them. “ Draw up the water quickly, and fill the troughs, that so the sheep may drink before the men see us.”

Three of the maidens hurried with their pails to draw the water, while the others urged the timid flock to the troughs. But scarcely had the panting sheep begun to drink, when loud shouts were heard near by, and a half dozen rude shepherds came running to drive them away.

“ Have we not told you to wait until we have given our sheep drink ? ” they cried. “ There is hardly water enough for all.”

Then the young man Moses stood up and showed himself, and drove the rude shepherds from the well, and helped the maidens water their flock.

That evening the girls drove their sheep home much earlier than was their wont.

“ Why is it that you have come home so soon to-day ? ” asked their father.

“ A young stranger was at the well,” they answered, “ and he kept the shepherds away while our sheep drank from the troughs.”

“Yes,” said Zipporah, the youngest and handsomest of the seven, “and he also drew the water for us, and watered the flock.”

“And where is the stranger?” said their father. “Why is it that you did not bring him home with you? Make haste and call him, that he may eat bread with us, and lodge for the night in our tent.”

The young man was glad to become the guest of the good Arab, and he was in no haste to go farther. Every day he helped the maidens drive their sheep to the pasture, and every evening he sat in the tent door, and listened to the wise talk of the old man their father. Thus the time passed pleasantly away, and at last he made up his mind to stay in that quiet, peaceful place, and be a shepherd all the rest of his life. And so he married the pretty Zipporah, and kept the flock of her father, and lived in her father’s tents, and cared no more for the riches and power which might have been his in the Land of the Nile.

III. THE BURNING BUSH.

Forty years passed by.

The Children of the Prince were still toiling under their cruel taskmasters in the Land of the Nile; and every day their burdens were made heavier, and their bondage became more bitter. In their great

distress they cried out, and prayed God that he would send them help.

In the mean while Moses kept his father-in-law's sheep in the wild country of the Arabs. But he had not forgotten his kinsfolk in the Land of the Nile, and the memory of their troubles was always in his mind. One day, as he was tending his flock on the side of a mountain, he saw a strange vision. A bush that stood close by seemed to catch fire, and burn with a blaze that was brighter than the sun, and yet it was not harmed in the least. While he stood looking at it, and wondering, he saw an angel in the flame, and heard a voice calling him by name.

"Here am I," he answered.

"Come not any nearer, for this is holy ground," said the voice.

Then Moses hid his face for fear, and stood still and listened. And the voice told him how his kinsfolk were oppressed in the Land of the Nile, and how they had cried to God for help.

"Go down, therefore," it said, "and free my people from their bondage, and lead them forth into the Land of Promise."

But Moses said, "How can I do this thing? How can I go before the King, and persuade him to let the Children of the Prince go free? I am slow

of speech, and cannot find words to say that which I ought to say. Send some one else, I pray."

The angel said, "Go, and I will be with you, and teach you what to say. And I will send your brother Aaron to meet you, and go with you; for I know that he can speak well."

So Moses left his flock with his father-in-law, and started to go back to the Land of the Nile. But while he was still in the wild country of the Arabs, whom should he meet but his own brother Aaron. He kissed him, and told him all that happened to him, and how he had been bidden to go down and free their people from bondage, and lead them forth into the Promised Land.

Then the two brothers went down boldly into the Land of the Nile, and told their people that they had come to help them; and the people believed them, and bowed their heads, and thanked God that he had at last sent deliverance.

Not long after that, Moses and his brother went up and stood before the King, and asked him to allow the Children of the Prince to go three days' march into the wild country to make offerings there to their God. But the King laughed at them in scorn, and asked, —

"Who is your God? Why do you hinder the people from their work?"

And he ordered the taskmasters to put more work upon the poor slaves, and to whip them if they failed in their tasks. This they did; and the slaves cried out against Moses and Aaron, and said, "If we had not listened to you, we should not have had these things to bear. You have made our burdens heavier than before."

Then Moses and Aaron went up again, and stood before the King; and they carried with them the rod or staff which Moses had used when he kept his father-in-law's sheep in the wild country.

"Who is your God?" again asked the King. "Show me some wonderful thing that you can do through his help."

Then Aaron threw the rod down upon the ground, and it was turned into a great snake. But the King was not alarmed at this.

"I have seen that trick before," he said. And he sent for his magicians, and told them what Aaron had done, and showed them the snake on the ground.

"It is very easily done," they said. And they threw down their rods, and every one was turned into a snake. But the snake that had sprung from Aaron's rod swallowed up all the others, and then became a rod again.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" cried the magicians.

“Now will you let our people go?” asked Moses.

“No, I will not let them go,” said the King; and he sent word to the taskmasters to have no pity for their slaves, but to make their burdens still heavier.

IV. THE TEN PLAGUES.

The next morning Moses and Aaron went again to speak to the King. They found him by the river-side, where he had gone for his daily bath. And Moses said to him,—

“O King! the God of my people has sent me to ask you to let them go, that they may serve him in the wild country beyond the Red Sea.”

“Who is your God?” asked the King. And he bade them begone from his sight.

Then Aaron lifted the magic rod, and stretched it out towards the river; and the water became red like blood, and no one could drink of it, and all the fishes in the river died. The King’s magicians tried to do the same thing, and some of the water which they touched with their rods was turned into blood.

Seven days passed by, and then Moses again asked the King to let the people go. And when the King refused, as before, Aaron stretched the magic rod over the water of the Nile; and frogs came up out of the river, and filled the

whole land, and hopped into the houses and palaces, and there was no place that was free from them. The magicians also stretched their rods over the river, and more frogs came leaping out of the water.

This time the King was much troubled; and he told Moses, that, if he would pray God to kill all the frogs, he would do what he wished, and let the people go. But when the frogs were all gone, the King forgot his promise. Then Aaron stretched out the rod again, and the land was filled with fleas and other vermin, and both men and beasts were covered with them.

“This is the finger of God,” said the magicians. “There is no power in magic to do such a thing.”

But the King was still stubborn, and would not yield. And Moses brought up great swarms of flies, that filled the houses, and lighted on everything in the land; but in the valley of Goshen, where most of the Children of the Prince lived, there were no flies.

“Why cannot your people stay at home and offer sacrifices to your God?” asked the King.

“It is not right that they should do so,” said Moses. “They must go into the wild country, as he has bidden them.”

“Then they may go,” said the King; “only rid the land of these swarms of flies.”

But the next day, when the flies had all been removed, the King again changed his mind, and said —

“No, they shall not go. Let the taskmasters give them still more work to do.”

Then Moses stretched out his hand, and a great sickness broke out among the cattle and sheep, and they died by the thousands all over the land. But of the cattle and sheep that belonged to the Children of the Prince there was not one that sickened, or was troubled with the plague.

“Will you let my kinsmen go now?” asked Moses.

“No, they shall not go,” said the King.

Then the two brothers scattered ashes in the air; and on the morrow boils and grievous sores broke out on men and beasts, and even on the magicians in the King’s palace. And when the King still refused, they lifted their hands towards the sky, and there was a great storm of hail, with lightning and thunder, such as no man in that land had ever seen before. The King was now greatly alarmed, and he cried out, “I have sinned! Pray that the storm may cease, and then your people may go whithersoever they wish.” But when the storm had passed



by, and the sky was again clear and bright, he recalled his promise.

Moses next threatened, that, if the people were not allowed to go, he would bring locusts or grasshoppers into the land, that should fill the fields and the houses, and eat up every green thing that had not been destroyed by the hail. Then the wise men of the land begged the King to keep his word, and do as he had promised.

“Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God,” they said.

“The men may go,” said the King, “but the women and children shall not.” And he drove Moses and Aaron out of the palace.

The very next day an east wind blew over the land, and the air was filled with locusts, or grasshoppers, until the sun was hidden from sight, and every green thing was eaten up. Then the King in great distress cried out, —

“Forgive my sin once more. Take all the people of the Children of the Prince, and lead them out into the wild country, as you have asked.”

And when Moses prayed, there came a strong west wind which carried the grasshoppers before it, and cast them all into the Red Sea. But the foolish King again broke his promise.

Then Moses lifted his hand towards the sky, and

for three days there was thick darkness all over the land; only in the valley of Goshen, where the Children of the Prince lived, there was light. And the King was again frightened, and said to Moses that the people might surely go this time, but that they should leave all their flocks and herds behind.

“No, indeed!” said Moses, “not a hoof shall they leave behind.”

“Then begone and save yourself!” said the King in great anger. “If you dare to come before me again, you shall die!”

And Moses turned away from him, and said, —

“I will see your face no more.”

And then the tenth and last plague came.

It was in the early spring, and the moon was at its full. At midnight the angel of death passed over all the land, and in every house the eldest child lay dead. Everywhere, in the King's palace as well as in the lowliest hut, there were shrieks of distress and grief, and the air was filled with sounds of mourning and despair. But it was not so in the homes of the Children of the Prince. Moses had told them to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb, so that the death angel, as he passed, might see it, and not enter there. And so they were spared; while those who had enslaved them,

and treated them with so great harshness, were afflicted with untold grief.

Then the King sent to Moses and Aaron, and begged that they would lead their people out of the Land of the Nile quickly.

“Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and begone. And bless me also,” he said.

V. THE LONG JOURNEY.

Then Moses and Aaron gathered the people together in haste, and they began their perilous march out of the Land of the Nile. There were more than half a million men and women, besides children; and they took with them their flocks and herds, and all the goods of every kind that they could carry. But they were scarcely halfway to the borders of the land, when they heard that the King, with a great army and six hundred chariots, was following after them. This news filled every heart with fear; and many of them cried out against Moses, and said, —

“Why did you not let us alone? It would have been better to live as slaves than to be slain with our wives and children here in the desert.”

But Moses led them on towards the east, and in the evening they came to the shore of the Red Sea.

What now should they do, with the water before them, and their old masters close behind? It seemed as though there could be no help for them at all. But Moses lifted his magic staff, and a strong wind came down from the east, and blew the tide away; and, as the sea was quite shallow there, the sandy bottom was soon laid bare. Then the Children of the Prince, — men, women, and children, — with their flocks and herds, marched boldly across; and a pillar of fire went before them to show them the way, but behind them was a dark pillar of cloud, that hid them from the sight of their foes. All night long they marched over the bared sands of the shallow sea, and at daybreak every one stood safe on the farther shore. Then, looking back, they saw the King's chariots and his armed horsemen following not far behind; but the sand was soft, and the wheels dragged heavily, and the horses' feet sank deep in the mire. And now the wind died away, and the tide came rushing in, and the waves rose high, and the King and his hosts were seen no more. The sea had swallowed them up.

Thus at last the Children of the Prince were free: they were now on the borders of the great wild country beyond which was the land flowing with milk and honey, that had been promised to their fathers for an inheritance. Then, while they



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MOSES LIFTED HIS MAGIC STAFF.

rested by the shore of the sea, Moses made up a song of victory, and of thanksgiving to God for having thus brought them safely out of the land of bondage. And all the men who were with him, and had a voice for music, joined in singing it.

“ I will sing unto the Lord,
 For he hath triumphed gloriously.
 The horse and his rider
 Hath he thrown into the sea.
 The Lord is my strength and song,
 And he is become my salvation.”

And then Miriam, the sister of Moses, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances; and they answered in chorus, —

“ Sing ye to the Lord,
 For he hath triumphed gloriously.
 The horse and his rider
 Hath he thrown into the sea.”

This was the way in which the Children of the Prince began their long journey towards the Promised Land. A long journey indeed it proved to be, for they wandered hither and thither among the mountains and in the desert for forty years; not because the Promised Land was so far away, but because they could not agree among themselves,

and were afraid of the people who already lived there. When at last they came within sight of the fair country which was to be their home, Moses was very old, and the host that he led was like the sands of the sea for number, for they could not be counted. And yet among all that host there were only two men who had been with him in the Land of the Nile. A new generation had grown up during the long wanderings, and the babes who had crossed the Red Sea were now middle-aged men and women.

“I shall see the Promised Land, but I shall not enter into it,” said Moses.

And he went up into a high mountain where he could look down upon the fair country. Below him lay the Dead Sea, where the wicked cities of the plain once stood, its white waters glistening like snow in the sunshine; and there was the river which we call the Jordan, winding among hills and pleasant groves and through fruitful valleys; and just beyond it was a fair city, the city of Jericho, nestling among tall palms, in the midst of fields of waving grain; and stretching away and away to the western sky were the fertile plains, the rich valleys, and the vine-clad hills of the Land of Promise. And while Moses was looking upon this delightful prospect, he died; but no man was with

him, and no one ever knew where his body was laid. He was a hundred and twenty years old, but as bright-eyed and hale and strong as he had ever been. And when the people learned that he was dead, they mourned for him thirty days.

There was still much to be done before they could enter into the Promised Land, and make for themselves homes in that delightful region. Many tribes of warlike men dwelt among the hills and in the valleys, and these they must fight and subdue. Many strong and high-walled cities stood in the midst of the land, and these they must capture and destroy. And so, while they mourned for their great leader, their captains made ready for the conflict that was before them, and the hearts of all were full of hope.

“It shall be well with us,” they said to one another, “if we remember the words that Moses spoke to us; for they are the commandments of God.”

And always after that, the children of the Prince, or Israelites, were governed by the laws which Moses had given them while they were wandering among the mountains and deserts of wild Arabia. And their descendants to this very day remember and honor him as their greatest law-giver and the most famous man of their race.



“THE MAN WHOSE EYES WERE OPEN.”

I. THE SOOTHSAYER.

THERE lived in the mountain land this side of the great river Euphrates a Soothsayer whose fame had gone out into every country of the East. Some men said that he was a prophet, and had learned his wisdom from on high; and others said that he was a magician, and had gotten his skill from the powers of evil. But, be that as it may, he foretold many things truthfully, and people came to him from far and near to learn about matters that were to them strange and unknown.

One day a company of men from the West came to see him. They brought with them gifts of gold and frankincense and honey, and many beautiful and costly things; and when they had rested themselves, and washed their feet and their hands, and eaten bread with him, they told him their errand.

“Our King,” they said, “sends to you these gifts; and he begs that you will make all haste and return

with us, that so you may save our country from destruction."

"Where is your country?" asked the Soothsayer, "and how can I save it from destruction?"

"Our country," they answered, "lies five days' journey to the west, with the desert on this side of it, and the Dead Sea beyond; and it is rich in flocks and herds, and in corn and honey. But a great tribe of wandering men who call themselves the Children of the Prince have come up like so many grasshoppers from the Land of the Nile; and they have camped on the borders of our land, and threaten to drive us from our fields and our cities, and to destroy us from the earth, as they have destroyed the nations that were neighbors to us. We know that we are not strong enough to stand against them, for they are like the sands of the sea in number. And so our King sends you this message: 'Come, I pray you, and curse this people, and then we shall prevail against them, and drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed indeed, and that he whom you curse is accursed.'"

"Why should I do this thing for your King, who is a stranger to me?" said the Soothsayer. "But lodge with me in my house to-night, and in the morning I will tell you whether I will go."

So the men staid with the Soothsayer that night, and in the morning he brought them his answer.

“Go back into your own land,” said he, “and tell your King that I will not curse the people who call themselves the Children of the Prince: for in the night I had a vision, and a voice spoke to me, and said, ‘Go not with the men, and do not curse the people who have come up out of the Nile country; for they are my people, and they are blessed.’”

The men bowed themselves, and then mounted their camels, and made all speed to carry this answer back to their King.

Ten days after that, there came to the Soothsayer other men from the same country; and they were the princes of the land, and stood next to the King. They brought two gold cups as presents for the Soothsayer, besides many other gifts of great beauty and worth.

“O wise man of the East!” they cried, “our master the King prays that you will let nothing hinder you from going to him at once. See these rich presents which he has sent! and you shall have many more, and the King will give you the highest office in the land, if you will only hasten and curse these robbers who call themselves the Children of the Prince: for now they have crossed

our borders, and are burning our towns, and driving away our flocks, and killing our people; and we are not strong enough to stand against them."

The Soothsayer took the presents from their hands, and said, "I would fain please your King, for he seems to be fair-minded and just; and yet, if he were to give me a house full of silver and gold, I cannot do that which he wishes, unless the God whom I worship bids me. But lodge with me to-night, and in the morning I will answer you."

So the princes slept in the house of the Soothsayer that night; and in the morning when they arose, they found him with his cloak upon his shoulders, and his sandals on his feet, ready for a long journey.

"Let us lose no time," said he, "for I will go with you to your country. But what I shall say to those enemies of yours, whether cursings or blessings, I know not."

II. THE VISION.

Over the hills and across the lonely desert, the Soothsayer and the princes made their way, having their faces always towards the place of the setting sun. The princes rode on fleet-footed camels, with

spearsmen leading the way; and the Soothsayer followed them, mounted on an ambling donkey, with his two servants running behind. On the fifth day they reached the borders of a fair country where there were trees and vines, and now and then a field of grain, or a green pasture where sheep were feeding.

“This is our land,” said one of the princes,—
“the land of which these men from the Nile would rob us.”

After a time they came to a place where the road was quite narrow, with a vineyard on one side, and a field of grain on the other.

The Soothsayer was riding carelessly along, looking at the great clusters of grapes upon the vines, when all at once his donkey sprang to one side, and ran into the field. What could ail the beast! She had never acted so before.

Her master beat her soundly with his cane, and at last forced her to go back into the road.

A little while after, they came to a place where there was a stone wall on either side of the road. Here the donkey stopped, and tried to go back. But when the Soothsayer beat her again, she sprang to one side and rushed forward, crushing her master's foot against the wall.

“Is the beast mad?” said one of the servants.

“Nay,” said the other, “I think that she has seen a spirit;” for in those times people believed that some animals were gifted with powers of sight that were denied to men, and that they could see things which our dull eyes cannot perceive.

And now the road became still narrower. It was a mere path between two rocky banks, and was barely wide enough for a camel to pass with his rider on his back.

All at once the donkey stopped, and then fell down upon her knees. The Soothsayer had been vexed before, but now he was in a rage. He seized a stick that was lying on the ground, and beat the donkey with many a blow.

“What have I done,” cried the poor beast, “that you should beat me so cruelly?”

“You have mocked me, you have mocked me!” answered her master. “If I only had a sword in my hand, I would kill you!”

“Have I not served you well ever since I belonged to you?” said the donkey. “And did I ever behave in this way before?”

“No,” said the Soothsayer; and then, looking up, he saw the cause of the beast’s affright. Right in the path before him stood a shining being, whose face was like the sun, and who held in his hand a drawn sword of wondrous length. There was no

way to pass by, either on the right or on the left, and to go forward would be to meet death at the point of the sword. The Soothsayer covered his face with his hands, and bowed himself to the ground.

“Why have you beaten your poor beast these three times?” said the bright being. “I have come out to meet you, because your heart was not right, and you were longing for the rewards which the King of this land has promised you. If the donkey had not seen me, and turned aside, I would have killed you, and saved her alive.”

The Soothsayer was filled with fear, and cried out for mercy.

“Truly, I have done wrong,” he cried. “I did not know that you were standing in the way. Spare me now, I pray, and I will go back into my own country with all haste.”

“Not so,” said the bright being. “Arise, and ride on with the men of the King. But have a care that you speak only the words which you are bidden to speak.”

Then the Soothsayer arose and looked; but the flashing sword was no longer in the way, and the shining being with the sun-bright face had vanished. He spoke kindly to the trembling donkey, and then he rode on to overtake the men of the King.

“Is our master mad?” said one of his servants. “He never acted so strangely before.”

“Nay,” said the other; “I think that he too must have seen a spirit.”

III. THE FIRST MOUNTAIN.

When the King of the land heard that the Soothsayer had come, he went out to meet him; and he again promised him great rewards if he would curse the Children of the Prince.

“I have no power either to bless or to curse,” said the Soothsayer, “only as it is given to me from on high.”

On the morrow they went up into a high mountain, from near the top of which they could see all the country around. Looking to the southward, they saw the plains covered with the tents of the strange people who had come up out of the Land of the Nile. There were thousands of men and women and children; and their flocks and herds dotted the hillsides for miles away.

“Build seven altars here on the mountain top,” said the Soothsayer, “and bring me seven fat oxen and seven rams.”

The servants of the King hastened to do as they were bidden; and the Soothsayer killed the oxen

and the rams, and then laid the choicest parts of the flesh upon the wood of the altars.

“Now bring me fire,” he said; and soon seven columns of smoke arose from the altars, and the flames burst out, and the air was filled with the pleasant odor of the burning flesh.

Then the Soothsayer said to the King, “Stand here by the altars, and I will go aside by myself. It may be that a spirit will come and talk with me, and tell me what to do.”

He walked away, and climbed still higher up the mountain side. At last, when he reached the top of the highest peak, he stood still and wrapped his cloak about him, and waited in the midst of the smoke which came up from the burnt offerings. And the King and his princes stood in silence by the altars.

At last the oxen and the rams were burnt up, the fires died away, and nothing but white ashes was left on the loose stones of the altars; and then the Soothsayer, with slow steps, came down to meet the King.

“O man of wisdom!” cried the King, “is it well with you? Come, stand on this jutting rock, where you can see the host of robbers, and then curse them every one, that so our land may be saved from destruction.”

THE SOOTHSAYER STOOD UPON THE ROCK, AND LIFTED HIS HANDS TOWARDS HEAVEN.



The Soothsayer stood upon the rock, and lifted his hands towards heaven ; and then he spoke : —

“ From my mountain home in the East
The King of this land has called me.
He would have me curse this people
Who have come up from the Land of the Nile.
But how shall I curse whom God hath blessed?
How shall I defy whom God hath not defied?
From the top of the rocks I see them,
And from the hills I behold them.
Lo, they shall dwell alone in the land,
And there shall be none beside them.
Who can count the Children of the Prince,
Or number a fourth of this people?
Oh, give me the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his ! ”

When the King heard these words, he was angry, and cried out, “ What are you doing? I brought you here to curse my enemies, and, instead of that, you have blessed them.”

But the Soothsayer answered, “ Must I not speak the words that are given to me from on high? for I have no power of my own either to bless or to curse.”

“ This is not a good place,” said the King, “ and perhaps you have not heard the right voice. Tomorrow we will go up into another mountain, and try again.”

IV. THE SECOND MOUNTAIN.

The next day the King and his princes and the Soothsayer climbed to the top of Mount Pisgah. It was much higher than the other mountain. From its summit they could see all the country spread out before them like a map. At their right, almost at their feet, was the Dead Sea, its calm waters glistening like silver in the rays of the sun. Beyond it were the hills and valleys of the Land of Promise, where were thousands of fields and orchards and vineyards, and many a white-walled city half hidden among groves of stately palm trees. It was a wonderful and beautiful sight; but the Soothsayer turned away to view the plains that were stretched out before him and on his left. There he could see the encampment of the Children of the Prince, but it was so far away that the people looked like mere specks moving about from place to place.

“Build seven altars here,” he said, “and bring seven fat oxen and seven rams for a burnt offering.”

And when the smoke arose from the altars, he said to the King, “Stand here while I go yonder.” And he went and hid himself in a cave among the rocks, where no one could see or hear; and when

he had covered his face with his cloak, he stood still and waited for a long time.

Hour after hour passed by, the fires on the altars burned low, and the King and his princes grew tired of waiting; but when the sun was almost down, the Soothsayer came out from his place and stood before them.

“What is your message this time?” asked the King.

The Soothsayer raised his eyes and held up his hands, and said,—

“God is not man, that he should lie,
 Nor the son of man, that he should repent.
 Hath he said, and shall he not do it?
 Hath he spoken, and shall it not be so?
 He hath blessed, and I cannot curse.
 Behold, this people shall rise up as a great lion,
 As a young lion shall they lift themselves up;
 They shall not lie down until they eat of the prey,
 And drink of the blood of the slain.”

The King was very angry because the Soothsayer blessed the people a second time, but he still hoped that there was some mistake.

“This is not a good place,” he said. “Tomorrow we will look down upon our enemies from the hill of Peor. It may be that you will be allowed to curse them from there.”

V. THE THIRD MOUNTAIN.

Early the next morning the King and the Soothsayer, with their servants and the princes of the land, went up into the mountain called Peor. It was not a very high mountain, but on it was a temple in which was an image of one of the gods of that country; and the King hoped that the Soothsayer would hear the voice of this god. As they stood and looked down upon the plain, they could see the Children of the Prince moving in and out among their tents. They could hear the shouts of the men, and the songs of the women, and the merry voices of the boys and girls; for the encampment was very near.

“Build me here seven altars, and get ready seven fat oxen and seven rams,” said the Soothsayer.

And the King’s servants made haste to do as they were bidden; and soon an ox and a ram were smoking on every altar. Then the Soothsayer, instead of going away by himself, turned his face towards the plain, and looked down upon the tents.

“O King!” he said, “hear now the words of the man whose eyes are open. Twice already he has spoken that which was given to him when in a trance; twice has he said what he heard in a trance with his eyes open.

“How goodly are the tents of the Children of the Prince !
 As valleys are they spread forth,
 As gardens by the riverside,
 As aloes which God hath planted,
 As cedar trees beside the waters.”

Then the King was very angry, and he clapped his hands together, and bade the Soothsayer stop.

“Did I not call you here to curse my enemies? Did I not promise you great rewards, and show you the lands and houses that I would give you? And now, instead of cursing these people, you have blessed them three times.”

“Did I not say unto your messengers,” answered the Soothsayer, “that, if their King should offer me his house full of gold and silver, I would not speak one word, whether good or bad, that was not given me from on high?”

“It is enough,” said the King. “If you would save your life, flee from this place at once.”

Then the Soothsayer spoke again.

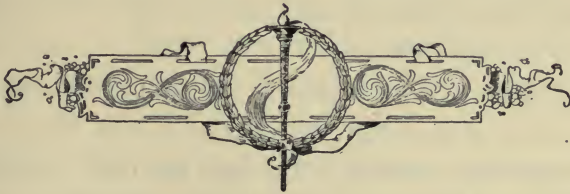
“O King!” said he, “hear the words of the man whose eyes are open. Hear the words which were given to him when he was in a trance, having his eyes open:—

“I shall see him, but not now ;
 I shall behold him, but not nigh ;
 From this people a star shall rise,

From them shall come a mighty king ;
And he shall smite the corners of your land,
And destroy all that dwell in your cities."

And when he had finished speaking, he went down the mountain, and hastened to go into his own country. And the King and his princes went their own way, and sought to find some other means by which to save their land.

The name of "the man whose eyes were open" was Balaam, and the name of the King was Balak. And there is a story that Balaam afterwards tried to help the King in another way; for he persuaded many of the Children of the Prince to worship the strange god whose image was on the mountain of Peor. But in the end he joined himself with the wild tribes of the desert; and, in a great battle that was fought against the people whom he had blessed, he was slain with the sword.





THE BEE AND THE GAZELLE.

I. THE BEE.

THEY called her Deborah, or the Bee, for that was the name which in those days was given to wise women and singers of songs.

She lived in a little house under a palm tree, and she was the busiest person in all the land. Men came from far and near to tell her about their troubles and to ask her advice. She settled their quarrels, and punished wrongdoers, and helped the poor, and bade everybody hope for the coming of better days.

“She ought to be our queen,” some would say.

“But we are slaves, and our people dare not have a queen,” said others.

“Then we will call her our judge,” was the answer, “and we will do what she bids.”

Those were indeed dark days for the Children of the Prince. Twenty years before, the King of the Canaanites, or Low Country Folk, had sent an army

against them, and had taken all their towns, and had made them his servants; and ever since then they had done his bidding, and had not dared to call anything their own. It was of no use for them to till their fields and raise fine crops of grain; it was of no use to tend their flocks or care for their vines and fruit trees: the Low Country Folk might come any day and take everything from them. The people left their homes in the towns, and fled to the woods and hills; and no one dared to travel on the highroads, but skulked from place to place by secret pathways.

“We are slaves,” they groaned, “and there is no help for us.”

But there was one person who did not lose heart, and that person was the Bee. She busied herself every day in making plans to free her people. She sent trusted spies into the Low Country to see what the King was doing; she learned all about his fighting men, and knew how many he could call into battle. Then she went out among the hills and called the men of her own nation together, and bade them be ready at any moment to rise up against their tyrant master.

Eighty miles away there lived a young man named Barak, whom she chose to be their leader. He was so brave and strong, and withal so bright

and quick, that he was called Lightning; and there was not a man in all the land who would not gladly obey him. One day the Bee sent for him, and said,—

“The time has come now to make a bold move for freedom, and we must act at once. How many men can you muster?”

And Lightning said, “Within two days’ journey from this place there are ten thousand who are only waiting to be called.”

“Then do not wait,” said the Bee, “but send out your messengers, and give the signal this very night for them to come together. Waste no time, but have every man hasten to this place, that so you may march out in great strength against our foes.”

That night swift messengers sped through the woods and among the hills, and beacon lights flashed on every mountain top in the land; and from among the rocks and glens came company after company of desperate men, all rallying to the call of their leader.

On the third day Lightning found himself at the head of a great army. Some of the men had come with swords and spears, some with axes, and many with nothing but clubs and stones. But all were full of hope, and ready to fight.

“Better die now than live longer in slavery,” they said.

Then the Bee said to Lightning, “Go forth with your hosts, and draw towards Mount Tabor, the Stone Quarry Mountain. The army of the Low Country Folk will come out to meet you, and you shall utterly overcome them.”

But Lightning began now to feel afraid.

“Do you know,” said he, “that the leader of our enemies is Sisera, the greatest warrior in the world? Men call him Battlefield, for he has never yet been beaten in fight. He has nine hundred iron chariots, and our people have suffered much at his hands. How can we prevail against him?”

“But you will prevail against him,” said Bee. “Go forth, and fear not.”

Then Lightning said, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, then I will not go.”

“Very well,” said the Bee, “I will go. But, mark what I say! the honors of the day shall not be yours, but another’s; for the Lord of the Battlefield shall meet his death at the hands of a woman.”

Then she went out and took her place with Lightning at the head of the army; and they marched to the foot of the Stone Quarry Mountain, and there awaited the coming of their foes.

II. THE GAZELLE.

It is noonday.

The sun shines down hot upon the grassy plain. The air is close and stifling. There is hardly a sign of life to be seen anywhere.

But here, in the sparse shade of some stunted shrubs, a few sheep and lambs are lying. They are panting for breath, it is so hot. Tempting as the short, sweet grass must be, they do not care to stir about in the fierce blazing sunlight.

A man is making his way across the plain. He has come down from the hills over towards the Stone Quarry Mountain, and he is alone and on foot. He looks around him all the time as though fearful of being seen. He skulks behind the shrubs, and stops now and then to listen. His feet are blistered and swollen with traveling over the hot stony ground. His face is wild and haggard. The slightest sound startles him.

He sees the sheep lying under the shrubs.

"Ah! this must be the pasture ground of my old-time friend, the Arab sheik," he says. "If so, his tents cannot be far away."

He climbs a little mound, and stands up straight and looks about him. Yes, yonder, a mile away, is a cluster of palm trees, and in its midst he

can see the white tops of tents. How cool and inviting! And there is water there to quench his burning thirst. If he can only reach that grove, he will be saved.

But what if his enemies have gotten there before him? In that case he had better die of the heat and of thirst, alone on the great plain. But his throat is already parched and dry, his tongue is swollen, his brain is on fire. He will take all risks for one drop of water.

At last the man reaches the edge of the grove. He drags himself into the shade of a palm tree, and glances wildly about him. There are the tents, only a stone's throw away; but not a living creature is to be seen. Even the dogs are sleeping.

And there is the well, with cool, refreshing water at its bottom. He will make a dash for it, although he must pass close by the door of the women's tent.

But he reels and staggers now. He has hardly strength to put one foot before the other. And—who is that? In the door of the women's tent stands Jael, or the Gazelle, the beautiful wife of the Arab sheik. She has been watching him for some time; indeed, she saw him while he was skulking across the plain. Will she know him in his strange, pitiable plight?



(134) IN THE DOOR OF THE WOMEN'S TENT STANDS JAEI.

Yes. She calls to him as he turns his wild eyes towards her.

“O Lord of the Battlefield!” she cries. “Welcome to our tents! Come in and rest yourself, for the heat of the sun is unbearable, and you must be weary with your journey.”

She takes his arm, and helps him into the tent. He falls upon the cushions by the curtained door, and gasps, “Water, water!”

“Here is something better than water,” she says; and she fetches a leathern bottle full of cool delicious buttermilk. He drinks, and is at once refreshed. He looks into the great dark eyes of the Gazelle, and his courage comes to him again. Surely he can trust her; surely she will befriend him.

“Now tell me,” she says, — and she speaks very kindly, — “tell me what has happened, that you, the greatest warrior in the world, must needs flee thus, on foot and alone, across the great plain.”

“Then you have not heard about it?” answers the chief, and his face lights up with hope. “I feared that my enemies had been here before me; nay, that they might be in the sheik’s tents even now. But, since you have asked me, I will tell you. Three days ago a great host of the Children of the

Prince came up and encamped on the slope of the Stone Quarry Mountain. They were led by their wise woman whom they call the Bee, and by the young outlaw chief whom they have nicknamed Lightning; and they defied me to meet them in battle. Then I marshaled my army, and rode out to meet them with nine hundred iron chariots behind me, and thousands of horsemen, besides bowmen and spearsmen without number; and we thought to make short work of the rebels. We met them early in the day, by the side of the river at the foot of the mountain; and we fought until the sun was in the west. But we could not stand before them. The stars were against us from the first. My horsemen were overthrown, my chariots were broken in pieces, my fighting men were slain, my army was routed, and I escaped only with my life. . . . They hunted me like a wild beast. They drove me out of the hill country, and I could find no hiding place nor safety anywhere. There was only one thing for me to do, and that was to cross the great plain, and seek my kindred in the lowlands of the east. But my enemies are not far behind me. They are on my track, and they may overtake me this very day."

"Fear not, my lord," says the Gazelle. "They will not dare come into my tent without my leave.

And so lie down a while and rest until the cool of the day, for I know that you must be sorely in want of sleep."

He needs not to be urged, for it is now three days since he has had any rest. He stretches himself upon the floor behind the curtains, and she covers him with a cloak.

"Now stand in the tent door," he says; "and if any one comes, and asks, 'Is there a man in here?' tell him, 'No.'"

In another moment he is asleep. The Gazelle, from her place by the tent door, hears his loud breathing. A fearful change comes over her beautiful face. Her great eyes do not sparkle with kindness and gentleness: they glare wildly, and her cheeks grow pale. She trembles, but not with fear.

"It was he that enslaved my mother's people," she whispers to herself; "it was he that robbed my kinsmen; it was he that slew my poor brothers, and would not listen to their prayers for mercy. Why did I not drive him away to die of thirst? But he might have escaped. He may yet escape; and then he will raise another army, and come and oppress my people again. It were a sin to let him do this. But what can I do?"

There is no one near to whom she can call. The

men have not been at home for now four days. Only women and children are in the tents, and they are sleeping through the heat of the day.

“In the evening,” she says, “he will awaken, and be refreshed, and go on his way. Our men can hardly take him then, even though they come; and he will soon be among his friends. But it must not be. I myself will save my people.”

She glances hastily about her. She does not ask herself, “Is it right?” She has never been taught the great law, Forgive your enemies. She thinks only of avenging the wrongs which her kinspeople have suffered.

But what can she do, — she, a weak woman, with no weapon of any kind?

Ah, what is that on the ground at her feet? A long sharp-pointed tent pin lies there, and near it is a heavy hammer. She can handle these more easily than a sword.

Softly, on tiptoes, she goes behind the curtains. She stoops over the sleeping man. The cloak does not wholly cover his head. The Gazelle holds the tent pin in one hand, and the hammer in the other. She shudders.

A moment later she runs, shrieking, from the tent.

With white face and frightened eyes, she stands under the palm trees and listens. There is no

sound in the tents save the crying of a child that has been wakened from its sleep. But suddenly there is a shout behind her. She turns, and sees a company of horsemen near at hand. She knows who they are; for at their head rides her own Arab husband, and by his side is Barak the Lightning, the leader of her mother's people. They leap to the ground, and she runs to meet them.

"Come with me," she says, "and I will show you the man whom you are seeking."

She leads them into her own tent. She lifts the curtains aside, and points toward the floor. There, still half-covered by the cloak, lies Sisera, the Lord of the Battlefield. He is dead.

"I was afraid you would not come," she says; "and I could not let him escape."

III. THE SONG.

When the people heard the first news of the great battle, they were very glad, for they hoped that the days of oppression were at an end. And some praised Deborah the Bee for her wisdom and courage, and some honored Barak the Lightning for his skill and daring.

"Now let us go back to our homes, and live in peace," said the young men.

But the old men shook their heads, and said, "Nay, for so long as Sisera lives, there can be no safety for us."

Then horsemen came riding from the plain, and told how the dreaded Lord of the Battlefield had met his death in the tent of the Gazelle. And the people were wild with joy, and declared that the Gazelle had done as much as the Bee towards making their country free; for those were wild, rude times, and men had not yet learned that treachery, even towards a foe, is a hateful and wicked thing.

And not long after that, when the Children of the Prince were again settled in their homes, Deborah the Bee made up a song of victory; and she and Barak sang it before the people when they met together to rejoice at the harvest feast. Here is a part of that song, almost as they sang it. It is one of the first songs ever written down.

"Awake, awake, O Deborah!
 Awake, awake and sing!
 Arise, O Barak brave,
 And lead thy captives in!
 Brave chiefs to the battle came,
 But they took no gain away;
 For the stars in their courses fought,
 They fought against Sisera.

“ Oh, blessed above all women
 Shall Jael the Gazelle be ;
 Oh, honored indeed is she
 Above all that dwell in tents.
 Sisera asked her for water,
 And she gave him milk to drink ;
 She brought him butter also,
 And he ate from a lordly dish. ”

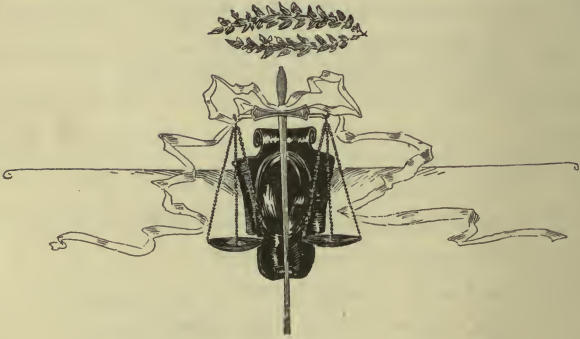
“ She put her hand to the tent pin,
 She held the workman’s hammer ;
 And with the heavy hammer
 She smote the dreaded warrior.
 She drove the nail through his temples
 When she smote with the workman’s hammer.
 At her feet he bowed, he fell —
 At her feet he bowed, he lay ;
 Where he bowed, he fell down dead. ”

“ The mother of Sisera looked out, —
 She looked out at a window, —
 And through the lattice she cried,
 ‘ Ah, why is Sisera’s chariot
 So long in coming home ?
 Ah, why run the wheels so slowly, —
 The wheels of his chariot of war ? ’ ”

“ The ladies who were with her answered, —
 She had already answered herself, —
 ‘ Is not the victory theirs ?
 Are they not dividing the spoil ? ”

And will not Sisera bring me
His share of fine needlework,—
Of needlework many-colored,
And fit for the necks of queens?’

“So let all thine enemies perish,
O Lord, our fathers’ God !
But let those who love and fear thee
Be as the morning sun.”





IDOL BREAKER.

I. THE IDOL.

IN the town of Ophrah, or the Fawn, there was a man who took care of an idol. This idol was made of wood, and was shaped somewhat like a man; but it was ten times uglier than any man you ever saw. It stood on a little platform in the midst of a shady grove, and the people of the town came and worshiped it. If any good luck happened to them, they thanked the idol, and burned incense, or sometimes the leg of a goat, before it; for they fancied that the ugly image had done it all. But if any misfortune befell them, they said that the idol was angry, and they crawled in the dust before it, and promised to do better in the future.

“What a sad place this world would be if our idol did not befriend us!” they said.

But the man who took care of this idol had a son who did not believe in it.

“How silly,” he said, “to think that a piece of painted wood can either help or harm us! It is only a log, and logs have no sense.”

One night he went with ten of his young comrades and threw the idol down upon the ground. They beat it with clubs, and broke off its arms and its nose, and carried away the platform where it had stood, and cut down the grove.

When the men of the town heard what had been done, they made a great ado about it.

“How dare any one harm our idol!” they cried. “Now, if we do not punish the young men who have abused him, he will be angry with us all, and cause some great misfortune to happen to us.”

So they took their clubs and their swords in their hands, and went up to the house of the man who had had the care of the idol.

“Where is your son?” they said. “We have come out to slay him for overturning and breaking the idol.”

“My friends,” said the man, “do you believe that you are stronger than the idol?”

“Oh, no!” they answered, “the idol is ever so much stronger than we.”

“Very well, then,” said the man; “if he is so strong, why can he not take care of himself? It seems to me, that, if he had been as mighty as

we believed him to be, he would not have suffered a few young men to beat him."

"It does seem so," said his neighbors.

And while they were talking together, the young man came boldly before them, and with his ax broke the fallen idol into a thousand pieces.

"Now, I should like to see him harm any of us!" he cried.

"How foolish we were to put our trust in that kind of an idol!" said the men; and they went slowly back to their homes.

And after that, the young man who had broken the idol was called Jerub-baal, a name which in his language meant Idol Breaker.

II. THE ANGEL.

The very next year a great army of Arabs invaded the country. They came with their camels and their tents, and there were so many of them that they could not be counted. The Children of the Prince were too weak to stand against them. They were beaten in every fight. The Arabs took their towns, and burned their houses to the ground, and robbed their fields and their orchards, and killed their young men. There was no peace nor safety in all the land.

“If we only had our idol,” said some of the people, “he would help us against our cruel foes.”

“We doubt it,” said others; “for he was not even strong enough to withstand the young man who broke him in pieces.”

And so things went on from bad to worse for seven years. The Children of the Prince could hardly show their faces for fear of the Arabs. They lived in dens which they made for themselves among the mountains, or in caves, or in strong places on the hilltops; and they dared not reap their grain nor gather their fruit, for then their cruel masters would swoop down upon them and take everything away. In all the land there was not a man who was brave enough to lead them against their foes.

One day in midsummer the young man whom they called Idol Breaker ventured out of his hiding place in the mountains, and went down to his father's farm to see how things were getting along. The Arabs had been there. They had pillaged the house, and had driven away the cattle. But they had not touched the growing grain, and now the wheat in the fields was yellow and ripe.

Idol Breaker thought how nice it would be if he could carry a sackful of fine new wheat to his famishing father and mother up in the

mountains. He looked around him. There were no Arabs to be seen. He would harvest some of the grain.

He found the little sickle which belonged to his father, and ran into the field. Soon he came back with as many sheaves of wheat as he could carry. He would thresh out the grains from these, and then he would go back and reap more. But what if the Arabs should see him? They would let him alone until he had finished his day's work, and then they would come and take his grain away from him. He dared not use the old threshing floor, for it was close by the roadside, and they would be sure to see him there; he dared not go into the house, for the first band of robbers who came that way would stop and find him while he was at work. But there was the old wine press which had not been used for three years or more. It stood behind some trees, and the weeds and wild vines had grown up around it until it was hidden from sight. It was just the place in which to thresh his wheat, for nobody would think of looking there.

He carried the sheaves into the place, and began to tramp upon them with his feet in order to knock out the grains. It was slow, hard work; for he did not dare to beat the straw with a flail, lest he

should be heard. All day long he was busy, and in the evening he was glad to find that, chaff and all, there was a bushel of wheat on the floor of the wine press. He was about to put it into a sack, when he happened to look towards the house. Who was it that he saw sitting in the shade of the great oak tree close by?

He knew that it was not an Arab, and so he was not afraid. But he had never before seen so handsome a man, and he wondered why he should be sitting there, all alone and so still. While he was looking and wondering, the stranger came towards him, and spoke.

“Hail, mighty man of valor!” he said. “The Lord is with you.”

“If the Lord is with us,” said Idol Breaker in a surly tone, “why does he let the Arabs deal with us in this way?”

The stranger did not answer his question, but said, “Go in your might, and set your people free!”

“How can I set them free?” said Idol Breaker. “My father is a poor man, and I am the youngest of all his sons.”

“Go forth in your might, and I will help you,” said the stranger.

Then the thought came into Idol Breaker’s mind

that this stranger must be an angel, and yet he was not quite sure that it was not all a dream; and he half expected to wake up and find it so.

“Wait here a few minutes,” he said to the stranger; and he ran to the house.

There was a young kid there which the Arabs had not taken; and this he killed and dressed, and laid upon some coals to broil. Then he found a few handfuls of meal in a chest; and of this he made some cakes, which he put into the ashes to bake.

“I will see whether he will eat of this food,” said Idol Breaker, “for angels do not eat;” and he kept looking out every minute to see that the stranger did not go away.

In a little while the cooking was finished. The young man made some broth in a pot, and put the meat and the cakes in a basket. Then he carried them out and offered them to the stranger.

“Lay the meat and the cakes on this rock,” said the stranger, “and then pour out the broth.”

The young man did so. Then the stranger stood up, and touched the food with his staff; and at once a great smoke arose, and then a broad flame of fire. Idol Breaker was so filled with wonder, that he did not know what to do; but, when he looked around for the stranger, he was gone.

“It was an angel, it was an angel!” cried the



young man. "And now I shall die, for no man can see an angel and live."

Then he heard a voice, saying, "Fear not. You shall not die until you have set your people free."

III. THE CAMP.

After that, the young man could think of nothing but of the angel, and of plans for setting his people free. He went from one place to another, calling upon the men to arm themselves and follow him; and it was not long until he found himself at the head of an army of thirty-two thousand men. Still he was afraid that he might fail, and so he did not dare to lead his men into open battle with the Arabs.

"If I could only have a sure sign!" he said. "Now I will put a fleece of wool on the ground; and in the morning if the wool is wet with dew, and everything around it quite dry, I shall know that the Arabs will be beaten, and my people will be saved."

And it happened just as he wished; for he arose early in the morning, and wrung a bowlful of water out of the fleece, while everything around it was dry.

But even then he was not satisfied.

"It may have been an accident," he said. "I

cannot risk a battle until I have another sign. To-night I will lay the fleece down in the same place, and in the morning, if it is dry, while everything else around it is wet, then I shall know that my people will be saved."

And it happened just so; for in the morning the fleece was dry, but there was dew on all the ground. And now he was no longer afraid.

Just as the sun was rising over the hills, he blew his trumpet; and his army arose at the call, and followed him down into the valley, where there was a famous well and much water. And the army of the Arabs, a great host with camels and horses, was encamped not far away.

"Now," said Idol Breaker to his men, "you see the foes whom we have come out to meet, and you must know that the battle will be a hard one. If any of you are afraid, I will give you leave to turn about right now, and go back to your homes."

Twenty-two thousand men left him at once, and with glad hearts hurried back to their safe caves and rock-built strongholds among the hills.

"Never mind," said Idol Breaker to the brave ten thousand who staid with him. "There are still enough of us to drive the Arabs out of the land." And he led them far up on the hillside, where they were well hidden among the trees, and where they

could overlook the camp of their foes. There they staid quietly all day long. The sun shone hot, and the air was sultry; and the men suffered from thirst, for there was no water to drink. At the foot of the hill there was a brook; but Idol Breaker would not allow any one to go down for a drink, lest the Arabs might see them.

“Wait until after the sun has set,” he said.

When evening came, and the camp of the Arabs could not be seen in the dusky twilight, he led his men to the brook. They were so thirsty that most of them forgot everything but the water. They threw themselves down upon the bank, and dipped their lips into the cool stream. But there were three hundred who kept their wits about them. They were eager to fight, and in a hurry to make a dash upon the camp of the Arabs; and so they dipped the water up hastily with their hands, and drank as they ran.

“You are the men for me!” cried Idol Breaker. “Let all the others go back to their places on the hillside.”

Then he led the three hundred men a little farther down the valley, and waited there until far in the night. When it was quite dark, and everything was still, he took one of his trusty servants and went over to the Arab camp. There were the tents and

the camels and the men,—thousands upon thousands of them,—covering the whole plain. Idol Breaker crept close to a tent, and listened. A man was telling his dream to his comrade.

“What do you think it means?” he said. “I dreamed that a cake of barley bread came rolling down the hill, and tumbled into our camp, and broke down our tents, and put all our men to flight.”

“It is a bad dream,” said the other man; “and it means that the sword of the Idol Breaker and of the God whom he worships will utterly overthrow the army of the Arabs, and put us all to flight.”

When Idol Breaker heard these words, he was glad, and fell down upon his knees and gave thanks to Heaven for this sign which had been sent him. Then he arose, and hurried back to the place where his three hundred men were waiting.

“Now do as I bid you, and we shall have a great victory,” he said.

And he put into the left hand of each man a deep pitcher with a lighted candle inside of it, and into each one’s right hand he put a trumpet.

“How shall we fight with these things?” said some.

“Only follow me, and do as I do,” said Idol Breaker.

IV. THE FLIGHT.

Idol Breaker divided his little company into three bands of one hundred men each, and showed them how they should go down to the Arabs' camp. One of the bands was to go around to the right, another to the left, and a third was to creep up to the center; and it was all to be done so quietly that not even the dogs could hear them.

Idol Breaker himself led the middle band, and it was about midnight when they reached the line of the camp. There was not an Arab stirring. Every one was in his own tent, fast asleep. There was not a sound to be heard. Then all at once Idol Breaker dashed his pitcher against a stone, and blew his trumpet, and shouted, —

“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!”

And every man of the three hundred did the same thing; and the light of the three hundred candles burst out in a moment from the darkness; and every man rushed with clattering speed right into the camp, shouting, —

“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!”

The Arabs awoke. They sprang up in great alarm. They saw the three hundred twinkling lights, and heard the three hundred blaring trumpets. In their fright they fancied that a great army had come

down upon their camp. No man thought of anything but how he should save himself. Some seized their swords and ran wildly through the camp, striking at every one they met. Some rushed half awake from their tents, and fled into the open plain. They fought among themselves, not knowing friend from foe. Soon the whole great army had betaken itself to flight.

Idol Breaker and his three hundred men followed close behind, swinging their burning candles, and blowing their trumpets, and shouting,—

“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!”

Then the rest of the ten thousand men who had been left on the hilltop came hurrying down, and joined in the pursuit. They overtook the Arabs, and with their swords and spears made great havoc among them. The din of battle and of flight moved onward across the plain. Morning came, and still the Arabs fled; and still their pursuers kept up the chase, shouting,—

“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!”

Towards midday, Idol Breaker and his men came to a walled town called the Town of Tents, which belonged to their own kinsmen,—people who called themselves Children of the Prince.

“Open your gates, O men of the Town of Tents!” said Idol Breaker. “We would fain go in

and rest ourselves a little while, and be refreshed; for we have followed our foes for a long time, and we are weary and faint.”

But the people of the town would not open their gates, nor would they give the hungry men any food. They stood on their walls, and taunted Idol Breaker and those who were with him.

“Why should we do these things for you?” they said. “You have not yet caught the Arab chiefs; and if they should turn upon you, what would become of you?”

“Very well,” said Idol Breaker. “Wait until I have caught them, and then I will tear your flesh with thorns and briars.”

And then, hungry and tired as they were, Idol Breaker and his men went on after the fleeing Arabs. By and by they came to a place where there was a strong tower of stone, called Prospect Tower.

“Open your gates, O kinsmen!” said Idol Breaker to the armed men in the tower, “and let us come in and rest a little while; and give us water to drink and some food to eat, that so we may be refreshed, and go on, and drive our enemies out of the land.”

But the men in the tower said, “This is no fight of ours. Why should we feed you?”

“Wait till I come again,” said Idol Breaker, “and I will break down the walls of your tower.”

All day long the Arabs fled, and all day long Idol Breaker and his men followed after. At night they rested by a brook, and on the morrow they renewed the chase. Just how long they kept this up, I do not know; but they did not turn back until the great host of a hundred and twenty thousand men had been scattered and put to the sword, and the two Arab chiefs had been caught and bound with chains.

Then early one morning before the sun was up, Idol Breaker led his little army back by way of the Town of Tents. And when he had forced the gates open, and led his men into the place, he took seventy-seven of the chief men of the town, and beat them with thorns and briars, as he had promised to do. As for Prospect Tower, he broke down its walls, and killed the men who were within, so great was his anger against them.

After this the Children of the Prince wanted Idol Breaker to be their king, because he had freed their country from the cruel Arabs. But he said, “No, I will not be your king. The God of our fathers, he is your king.”

Then he asked them if they would give him all the earrings that they had taken from the Arabs.

“ We will give them willingly,” they said.

So they spread a cloth upon the ground, and every one threw down upon it the jewels which he had taken, — the golden earrings and nose-rings, and the chains which had hung upon the camels’ necks, and the fine purple robes which the chiefs had worn. And Idol Breaker melted the gold, and made a golden image, and set it up in the Town of the Fawn, where the wooden idol had stood which he had broken in pieces when he was a young man.

“ Now we shall have peace,” said the people; and they came up from all the country round, and fell down upon their knees before the golden image, and thanked it for giving them the victory over their enemies, and setting their country free.

“ What a sad place this world was when we had no idol to befriend us!” they said. “ If our first idol had not been so badly treated, the Arabs would not have come into the land at all. But now we shall make amends for our wrongdoing, and this golden image will always protect us.”

And so Gideon — for that was his real name — was no longer called Idol Breaker; for he had now become an idol maker, and had given the people a golden image in place of the ugly wooden one which he had destroyed.



THE STORY OF SPLENDID SUN.

I. THE WANDERERS.

FROM very early times there had lived in certain parts of the Promised Land a rude people who had once had no settled homes, but had strolled about from place to place as their fancy pleased them. On account of their roving habits they had been given the name of Wanderers, or, in the language of the land, Philistines; and, even after they had begun to build cities and have houses and gardens of their own, their neighbors still called them by that name.

“This is the fairest land in all the world,” they said to themselves. “Let us stop wandering about, and dwell here forever.”

Many years passed by, and then there came into the same country a great host of people who called themselves Israelites, or the Children of the Prince, and who said that they were from the Land of the Nile.

“What are you doing in our land?” said the Children of the Prince to the Wanderers.

“That is a strange question,” said the Wanderers; “for, lo! our fathers before us dwelt here, and planted these vineyards, and built these towns; and we ourselves were born here, and these have been our homes all our lives. By what right, then, do you call this land yours? We might better ask, ‘What are you doing in our land?’”

“Five hundred years ago,” answered the Children of the Prince, “our great ancestor Abraham, the Father of Nations, abode in this country; and the God whom he worshiped promised him that all these green hills and rich valleys and grassy plains should belong to his children, and his children’s children, forever. Now, we are his children’s children, and according to God’s promise this land is ours. So move out at once, and let us have that which is our own.”

“Nay,” said the Wanderers, “we will not move out, for the country is our own.”

Then the Children of the Prince fought with the Wanderers, and gained many battles, and took their fairest cities, and made themselves houses in the land. And in the course of time the Wanderers had only a few towns that they could call their own; and they lived mostly among the

mountains, or in the western part of the land not far from the Great Sea.

But the Children of the Prince, when they found themselves settled at last in the Promised Land, did many unwise things. They forgot that it was the God of their great father Abraham who had blessed them and given them their pleasant homes; and they no longer worshiped him, but made themselves idols of wood and stone and metal, and said, —

“How good our idols are! We could never have prospered but for them. Let us worship them, and thank them for what they have done for us.”

But those senseless images could not help them against their enemies; and when the God of their fathers had withdrawn his aid, what could they do? The Wanderers again made war upon them; and now the Children of the Prince lost every battle. The Wanderers won back their towns and many of their choicest places in the West.

“What are you doing in our land?” they said to the Children of the Prince.

Very soon they were the masters of the country once more; and they treated the Children of the Prince very cruelly, and oppressed them for many years, and gave them but little peace.

“We shall see whose land this is,” they said.

Then the Children of the Prince began to remember the God of their fathers, and they cried to him for help.

II. THE STRANGER.

In the hill country not very far from the sea-coast there lived a farmer and his wife who were proud of being called Israelites, or Children of the Prince. They often talked of their great ancestors who had lived in times now long past,—of Abraham, the Father of Nations; of Israel, the Prince, who had lived in the Land of the Nile; and of Moses, the Lawgiver, who had led their people to the Promised Land. Then, when they thought of how their kinsmen were being oppressed and enslaved by the Wanderers, their hearts were filled with grief; and they thought, that, if they only had a son, they would train him up to be a hero, so that he would by and by set his countrymen free: for among all the Children of the Prince there was now not a man that dared lift his hand against their oppressors.

One day when the farmer's wife was alone, a stranger stopped at the gate to talk with her. He told her that a son would soon be born to her, and that this son would grow up to be a mighty hero,

and would begin to free the land from the race of strangers that had held it so long.

“But the child must be brought up with great care,” he said. “You must never cut his hair; and he must never taste of wine, or of any strong drink, or of any unclean thing.”

The woman was very glad; and, when her husband came home in the evening, she told him all about it.

“Why didn’t you have the stranger stay all night with us, so that I might ask him how we shall teach the child?” he said.

“Ah! he was gone before I could speak,” she answered.

The next day, as the woman was working in the field, she saw the stranger passing by, and she ran and told her husband. The man hurried out quickly, and met the stranger in the road.

“Are you the man who spoke to my wife at the gate yesterday?” he said.

“I am,” said the stranger.

“Then come in and teach us how we shall train up the son that is to be born to us,” said the good farmer; “for we would that he should grow up to be the deliverer of his country.”

“I have already told your wife what must be done,” said the stranger. “His hair must never be shorn, and no wine nor strong drink nor unclean

thing must ever touch his lips. There is nothing more to say."

"Well, then," said the farmer, "you must come in and eat with us. I am just going to kill a fat kid, and if you will wait till I have dressed it, and my wife has roasted it, we will have a good feast."

"No, indeed!" said the stranger, "I will not eat a mouthful. But it seems to me, that, instead of eating the kid, you ought to give it as a thank offering to Heaven for the good news which I have brought you."

"That is what I will do," said the farmer. "But since you will not eat with us, pray tell us your name, so that when the boy has grown up, and has become a great hero, we may remember you, and give you honor."

"My name is a secret," said the stranger; "and I will not tell it to you."

Then the farmer took the kid and killed it; and after that, he laid some dry wood on a flat rock before his house. And he put the kid on the top of the wood, and then set fire to it. He thought that when the smell of the burning meat went up to the clouds and the sky, God would be pleased with his thank offering. The smoke rose thick and black from the kindling wood, and the farmer and his wife stood a little way off to watch it; but the

stranger staid close to the rock. Soon the flames burst out, and the fat of the kid took fire, and blazed up high. Then the farmer and his wife noticed the stranger, how bright and shining was his face, and how his clothing glittered like the sun. And the flames shot up very high,—so high that the man and woman said that they reached heaven itself; but when they looked down at the rock again, the stranger was nowhere to be seen.

“He was an angel!” cried the woman.

“Yes, I know he was an angel,” said the man.

“And he went right up in the flames to the sky,” said the woman.

“Yes, that is where he went,” said the man; “and now we shall surely die, for nobody can see an angel and live.”

“Tut, tut!” said the woman. “Didn’t you see how our thank offering was carried to the sky? I guess we shall not die very soon after that. And then, what was the use of the angel coming and telling us all those things, if we are not going to live to see them come true?”

III. THE RIDDLE.

Not very long after that, a little boy was born in the farmer’s house; and his face was so fair, and his eyes were so bright, that they named him Splendid

Sun, or, in their own language, Samson. He was a very strong, hearty child, and he grew fast, and was the delight and wonder of the household. But his mother never allowed a hair of his head to be shorn, or any wine or strong drink or unclean food to touch his lips. As soon as he was old enough to do so, he helped with the work in the fields; and his father taught him about the cruel wrongs which his people had suffered at the hands of their rulers.

When he was only a lad, Splendid Sun astonished everybody with his great strength. Once he went down into the camp of the Wanderers near the town of Dan, and wrestled with the giant soldiers there; and after that he was the talk of the whole country.

One day, when Splendid Sun had become a tall young man, he made a visit to the town of Timnath among the hills, and became acquainted with a number of young Wanderers there. They seemed to him to be pretty good fellows; and, as they praised him and feasted him and treated him royally, he began to think that they were even better than his poor oppressed countrymen. Then he met a beautiful girl, the daughter of a rich Wanderer; and she promised to marry him if their parents could agree as to her price. For wives had to be bought in those times.

Splendid Sun hastened home, and told his father and mother what a fine time he had had in the town, and how the pretty Wanderer maiden had agreed to be his wife.

“I never saw a woman that pleased me so much,” he said. “Her father wants a high price for her, but she is well worth it. Get her for me.”

His father and mother were not well pleased, and they said, “Is there no maiden among the daughters of our kinsmen or among all our own people, that you must needs go and choose a Wanderer for a wife?”

But Splendid Sun would not listen. He did nothing every day but talk of the beautiful maiden; and he kept saying to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me.”

At last he persuaded his father and mother to go up to the town with him and see the maiden for themselves. They went up on foot, through the wild hill country, and came at last to a place just outside of Timnath where there were great thickets of wild grapevines. Splendid Sun was in great haste. He walked very fast, and left his parents far behind. All at once a lion sprang out from among the tangled vines, and rushed furiously upon the young man. He had nothing in his hand to defend himself with; but he seized the beast, and

HE SEIZED THE BEAST, AND PULLED ITS JAWS APART.



CHAS. R. KNIGHT
1895

pulled its jaws apart, and tore it in pieces, as easily as other men would have torn a rabbit. Then he tossed the body among the bushes, and went on as though nothing had happened. He did not even tell his father and mother about it.

When they reached the town and saw the maiden, they were well pleased with her, for she was not only fair, but lovable. Splendid Sun's father agreed to get her for him, and a day was set for the wedding. But his mother grieved because he had not found a maiden among his own people; for, she thought, how now would he become a hero, and deliver his land from oppression?

A few weeks afterwards the young man and his parents went up to Timnath again; and this time there was to be a wedding feast, and they would take the maiden back with them. As they were passing through the grapevine thicket, Splendid Sun turned aside to see what had become of the dead lion. There was nothing left of it but its skeleton; but a swarm of bees had built a nest among the bones, and in it was a big piece of honeycomb full of honey. He took the honeycomb in his hand and went on, eating as he walked. When he overtook his parents, he gave them a part of it, but he said nothing about the place where he had found it.

Splendid Sun made a great feast in the town, for

which his father had to pay, and he invited all the young Wanderers whom he knew. That was the way which young men did in that country. The feast was to last seven days, and then the bride was to be given to her husband. Thirty gay young fellows sat at the table with Splendid Sun; and they sang songs and told stories, and amused themselves in many ways. But not a drop of wine or of strong drink did Splendid Sun taste; and as he stood before his guests, with his long hair falling in seven plaits down his back, all the Wanderers admired him.

“Now,” said he to the thirty young men, “I will tell you a riddle. If you can guess it within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty sheets and thirty fine suits of clothing. If you cannot guess it, then you shall give me thirty sheets and thirty fine suits of clothing.”

“Agreed!” cried the young men. “Let us hear it!”

Then he gave them this riddle: “*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*”

For three days they tried to guess the answer, but they could not think of anything that seemed to be right. Then they went to the young bride, and said, “Find out this riddle for us. If you don’t, we’ll burn your father’s house, and you too, with

fire. Do you take us for fools, that we should let this underling rob us in this way?" For the suits of clothing were very costly.

Then the maiden wept bitterly, and Splendid Sun was much troubled, and asked her what was the matter.

"You are a cruel fellow," she said; "and you do not love me at all. Here you have given a riddle to your guests, and have not told me the answer. You are hard-hearted."

"My dear girl," he said, "I have not told it even to father or mother; and should I tell it to you?"

Then she wept harder than ever; and she kept on weeping until the seventh and last day of the feast. And when Splendid Sun saw how sad a wedding he was going to have, he at last gave up, and told her; and she dried her tears, and went and told the young men. In the evening, when the feast was at an end, Splendid Sun said, —

"How now about those thirty suits of clothing? Have you found out the riddle?"

And the young men laughed, and said, "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?"

"You would not have found that out if you had dealt fairly with me," said Splendid Sun.

What was he to do now? He could not take his bride home until this wager was paid. He had no money. His father had no money, for he had spent it all to pay for the maiden and for this feast. Splendid Sun was angry at the young Wanderers, and he was vexed with the fair girl who had caused all the trouble.

That very night he went out to another town of the Wanderers, and stole thirty suits of clothing, and came back and gave them to the men who had gained the wager. It is even said that he killed thirty men, and took the garments from their backs; and I am sorry to believe that he was so wicked. He was so angry that he would not look at the maiden, but left her with her kinsfolk, and went back to his father's house.

IV. THE FOXES.

Splendid Sun soon began to understand how very foolish he had been; and as the days passed by he longed to see his young bride and ask her pardon. But he was ashamed to go up to her father's house, and he was afraid that she would laugh at him and despise him. About the time of the wheat harvest, however, when the grain was standing yellow and ripe in the fields, he made up his

mind that he would go and claim her as his wife, and bring her home. He had no presents of jewelry or gold to take to her; but he carried under his arm a beautiful pet kid, which he felt sure would please her, and make her forget his folly.

But when he came to the house in Timnath and asked to see his bride, her father told him that she was not there.

“Truly,” he said, “we thought that you hated her, and that you would never come to see her again; and so I gave her to one of your friends, and she is wedded to him. But, see here! Don’t you think that her younger sister is fairer than she? You may have this sister if you want her, and I will give you my blessing besides; for I would not have you too greatly disappointed.”

Splendid Sun was so angry that he did not stop to make any answer. He turned away, and started homeward at once, feeling very bitter against the Wanderers, and trying to think of some way in which he could punish them for the injury they had done him. As he passed through the vineyards and wheat fields, he noticed that the stalks of grain and the grass and the leaves were very dry; for it was midsummer, and it had not rained for a long time.

“I know what I’ll do,” said he. “I will revenge

myself upon those young Wanderers for all the harm they have done to me; and I will not be half as wicked as they are, either."

So, instead of going home, he turned aside into the place where the wild grapevines grew, and began to set traps for foxes. There were a great many foxes in that neighborhood, and nobody knew how to catch them better than he. The next morning he came back, and found the traps full. All together, he and the men whom he brought with him took three hundred of the animals alive and unhurt. Then they tied them together in couples, and put a firebrand between each couple, and set them loose in the fields. The maddened foxes rushed hither and thither with the burning brands, and soon set fire not only to the standing wheat, but to the shocks of harvested grain and the vineyards and the olive orchards. It was all that the farmers could do to save anything from the flames.

The next day, as they looked over their black and smoking fields, they began to ask who it was that had started the fire.

"It was Splendid Sun," said one who had seen him tying the brands to the foxes.

"Why should he do this great wrong to us?" they asked.

"He did it because his bride was taken from

him, and given to one of the young men who had pretended to be friendly to him," was the answer.

The farmers were very angry, and vowed that they would punish not only Splendid Sun, but everybody that had had a hand in leading him to do this thing. They were afraid of Splendid Sun, and were in no hurry to follow him home. But when night came, they raised a mob of idle fellows, and went up into the town, and set fire to the house in which the young bride lived; and both she and her father were burned to death in the flames.

When Splendid Sun heard what had been done, he was wild with grief and anger.

"I will punish those Wanderers yet!" he cried; "and when I have made them suffer enough for all the misery they have caused me, then I will let them alone."

That very day he went into the town, and fell upon the leaders of the mob and upon the thirty young men, and smote them with great slaughter. After that, he knew that all the country would be up in arms against him; and so he fled hastily from the place, and made his home on the top of a rocky hill called Etam, some miles to the northward. Most of the people in that neighborhood

were of his own race, and proudly called themselves Israelites, or the Children of the Prince; but they had been ruled over and oppressed by the Wanderers for so many years, that they had lost all courage and all hope. For a time he was quite safe in his stronghold, and he made many friends among those who lived in the valleys below him. Soon, however, his enemies learned where he was, and sent a great army out to capture him.

The poor Children of the Prince were very much frightened when this army marched into their country and camped in their fields.

“What have we done, that you should come up against us in this way?” they asked.

“We are after Splendid Sun,” the Wanderers said. “We are going to capture him, and take him back with us, and punish him; and if you don’t help us take him, you shall suffer for it.”

Then three thousand men of the Children of the Prince went out to Etam Hill, and called to Splendid Sun, and talked with him.

“Do you know that the Wanderers are our masters?” they asked. “And why do you come among us, and make them hate us?”

“I only revenged myself upon them for the harm which they did to me,” said Splendid Sun.

“But that isn’t the question,” they said. “If we don’t give you up to them, they will burn our town, and kill us, and make slaves of our children. Won’t you let us bind you and take you to them, so that they will do us no harm?”

“Promise me,” he said, “that you will not try to hurt or kill me.”

And they promised.

Then he went down the hill, and let them bind him with two new cords that were very strong. And they carried him and gave him to the captain of the Wanderers’ army.

The Wanderers were glad when they saw Splendid Sun in their power, and they began to shout, and throw stones at him, and boast of what would be done to him when they had taken him back. But Splendid Sun stretched out his arms and his legs, and the cords flew in pieces as though they had been burned. He struck right and left, and his enemies fled for their lives. Then he found a strong bone on the ground, the jawbone of some animal that had lately been killed. He picked it up, and fell upon the Wanderers in earnest. The cowardly fellows were taken by surprise, and not one of them dared face about and withstand him. That jawbone did wonders in his hands. The whole army was routed, and a thousand of his enemies

were left dead on the field. There never was such another battle.

When it was all over, Splendid Sun threw the bone upon the ground, and sat down to rest. But he was almost dead with thirst, and he had followed his foes far away from the wells where water was to be found. The sun shone hot upon him, and he thought he was going to die.

“What is the use of my strength now?” he said. “I shall die here of thirst, and my foes will laugh over me.”

He looked at the jawbone lying in the sand a little way off. Something close to it sparkled in the sunlight. It did not look like sand, but like water. He got up and went closer. Yes, there was a spring of cool water, bubbling up right under the bone. He was saved.

Soon a great company of the Children of the Prince came out to meet him. The men had armed themselves with whatever they could find; and they said, “If you will be our captain, we will follow you, and fight against the Wanderers who have oppressed our people for so many years.”

Splendid Sun was now at the head of a strong army. The Wanderers dared not stand against them anywhere; and before another year the Children of the Prince were a free people. They were

very grateful to Splendid Sun for what he had done for them; and they chose him to be their chief and lawgiver.

And he was their chief and lawgiver for twenty years.

V. THE SECRET.

The Wanderers were very much afraid of Splendid Sun, and they tried in every way to get him in their power. Once he disguised himself and went down into one of their cities. His enemies learned that he was there, and lay in wait all night to catch him when he should come out to the city gate in the morning. But he arose earlier than they expected; and when he found the gate closed against him, he picked it up, and pulled up the two gate posts, and carried all to the top of a hill in his own land.

Near the border of Splendid Sun's country there lived a fair woman named Dainty, or, as they called her in their own language, Delilah; and Splendid Sun went often to see her. The rulers of the Wanderers knew that she had great influence over him, and so they promised to give her eleven hundred pieces of silver if she would find out the secret of his strength. She pretended that she thought a great deal of him, and he was foolish enough to believe her.

"Come now, Splendid Sun," she said one day, "tell me what makes you so strong, and how you can be made weak like other men."

Splendid Sun laughed, for he did not mean to part with his secret.

"Oh, tie me with seven green withes," he said, "and then I shall be as weak as any other man."

She told the rulers what he had said, and they gave her seven green withes that were long and strong; and armed men hid themselves in her house, ready to seize him as soon as his strength passed from him. The next day she bound him tight and strong with the withes, and when everything was ready, she cried out, "Your enemies are upon you, Splendid Sun!" He stretched his arms, and the withes were broken in pieces as easily as you can break a thread.

Dainty complained bitterly because he had not told her the truth. "You have mocked me," she said. "Now, tell me truly how I can bind you so as to hold you fast. It is all in fun, you know."

Splendid Sun laughed again. "Oh, well," he said, "if you must have that kind of sport, then tie me with new ropes that have never been used."

She told the rulers, and they gave her three new ropes that had never been used. And the next day she bound him with them until it seemed

as if he could never move. Then she cried out, "Your enemies are here, Splendid Sun!" He stretched his arms, and the ropes were snapped in a hundred pieces.

"O Splendid Sun!" said Dainty, "you are so cruel. You never tell me the truth, and you don't care anything for me at all."

"Well, then, I will tell you," said he. "To-morrow you may weave the seven locks of my hair in your loom, and then I shall be as weak as a child."

The next day he lay asleep on a couch by the loom, and she wove the seven locks of his long hair in the cloth which she was making, and then fastened it all with a huge pin. Certainly she would hold him this time. Then she cried out, "Here come your enemies, Splendid Sun!" He woke up quickly, and walked away with the loom, the pin, and the cloth upon his shoulder.

Dainty did not like it at all when she found that he had not yet told her the truth.

"Oh, why do you mock me?" she said. "These three times you have told me false. You are cruel! You laugh at me!"

And every day after that, she teased him and pressed him with her words, until he was vexed almost to death. At last, to get rid of her teasing, he told her the truth.

SHE WOVE THE SEVEN LOCKS OF HIS LONG HAIR IN THE CLOTH.



“Never in my life,” said he, “has a hair of my head been cut or shorn; and never has wine or any strong drink touched my lips. If my head were shaven, then I would be as weak as any other man.”

Dainty felt sure that he had told her the truth this time, and she sent word to the rulers of the Wanderers to come up. They came, and brought the eleven hundred pieces of silver, and hid themselves in her house. The next day when Splendid Sun went to sleep, she had a man ready to clip off the seven long plaits of hair. Then she screamed out, —

“Your enemies are upon you, Splendid Sun!”

He awoke quickly, but all his strength had left him. The Wanderers rushed in upon him and seized him; and, although he fought bravely, he was no stronger than one of them. Then they put out his eyes, and took him down to their city of Gaza, and chained him with chains of brass.

After that, for a long time, they made him grind corn as a slave in the prison house.

VI. THE TEMPLE.

It seemed as though there was no longer any hope for Splendid Sun. Yet in a little while his hair began to grow; and the longer it grew, the

stronger he became. His enemies never thought of that, however.

One day they had a great feast in the temple of their god Dagon, and everybody in Gaza was there. They said that it was Dagon that had shown them how to take Splendid Sun, and so they had made the feast as a sort of thanksgiving in his honor. Everybody wanted to see the strong man who had done so much mischief to the Wanderers: hence he was to be taken into the temple, where they would make a kind of public show of him. It is likely that they intended to torture him, and then offer him to Dagon as a sacrifice.

And so, when the people were all feeling very merry, and there was a great crowd in the temple, and three thousand men and boys were on the roof looking down, they called for Splendid Sun. To show how weak and harmless he had become, he was brought out of the prison house by a little boy. The boy led him up the steps, in the sight of all the people, and put him between the two great middle posts of the temple. The blind hero reached out with his hands and felt of the posts.

"Are these the middle posts of the temple?" he asked.

"Yes, they are the posts that hold up the roof," said the boy.

Then Splendid Sun took hold of the posts, one with his right hand, and one with his left.

“Let me die with my enemies,” he said.

And he bowed himself with all his might; and the roof fell upon all that were within the temple, and they were crushed to death. And it was a common saying in his country after that, that Splendid Sun slew more people at his death than he had ever slain in his lifetime.





A STORY OF HARVEST TIME.

I. THE GLEANER.

ON every side of the town of Bethlehem, as far as one could see, there were fields after fields of waving yellow grain. No man could remember that there had ever been so fine a crop of barley and wheat; no man could call to mind the time when the land was so full of plenty.

“Truly, our town is well called Bethlehem, or the House of Bread,” said the people one to another as they went about their tasks; “for here we have food enough for ourselves, and to spare.”

Before the sun had risen above the hills, and while yet the dew lingered among the grass, the harvesters were at their work. With their hook-shaped sickles they cut the grain handful by handful, and laid it in uneven swaths upon the ground; and as they kept time with one another, they chanted a song of thanksgiving and praise to the Sender of the harvest, the Giver of good

gifts, the Lord of the earth and sky. After them came the boys and young men who had not yet learned to handle the sickle,—some to gather up the swaths into bundles, and others to bind the bundles into sheaves.

Following these were the gleaners, the poor people of the village, and the strangers who were without homes in the land; for it was a law in that country that all the loose grain that was upon the ground, and all that was left uncut by the reapers, should belong to the needy and the homeless.

It was still early in the day, when some one cried out, “The master is coming!”

All eyes were turned towards the entrance to the field. The reapers ceased their chant; they stood up and wiped the sweat from their brows; they rested the points of their sickles upon the ground. Adown the road came Boaz, the owner of the field, a portly, middle-aged man, walking leisurely, as though well pleased with himself and with all the world beside. He was the richest man in the town, and one of its rulers. The fields on either side of the road were his; the great house just over the brow of the hill was his home; the men and boys who were harvesting the grain were his servants. He was indeed a great man.

He walked across the field towards the place where his men were waiting.

“The Lord be with you!” he said.

And they answered him, “The Lord bless thee!”

Then the reapers thrust their sickles among the grain again, and the harvest song was chanted louder and cheerier than before, as all hands moved slowly across the field.

“Hearken to me, Nathan,” said the master, calling to his head servant. “Hearken to me, Nathan, for I would fain speak to thee.”

“What is it, my master?” said the servant; and he gave his sickle into the hands of a young man, and ran back to where Boaz was standing.

“Whose damsel is this that gleans the wheat so timidly, and seems to be a stranger to the harvest field?”

And the head servant answered, “My master, it is the damsel that came back with Naomi, your kinswoman, from the land of the strangers beyond the river Jordan.”

“Indeed!” said the great man. “I had not heard of her. Tell me all that you know.”

“You no doubt remember,” said the head servant, “that in the year of the great famine many of our people crossed over into the land of the strangers; for there was much grain on the other side of the



“MY MASTER, IT IS THE DAMSEL THAT CAME BACK WITH NAOMI.”

river, while at home there was none at all. Among the last that went was your cousin Elimelech, with his wife Naomi and her two sons. They were so well pleased with the country and the people, that they staid there, and did not come home again when the famine was at an end. But soon Elimelech died, and the two sons took to themselves wives of the fair daughters of the land. Then the sons also died, and Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law. They were very, very poor; for their husbands had been only sojourners in the land, and their goods and all that they had were taken by their creditors. Then Naomi said to the two young women, 'I will go back into my own country, to Bethlehem, the House of Bread; for my kinsfolk dwell there, and I have heard that the Lord has visited his people, and given them great plenty. There I can work with my hands, and satisfy all my needs.' And the two young women said, 'We also will go with thee.' But Naomi said, 'Nay, but stay with your kindred. Go, each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me! The Lord grant you that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband!' Then she kissed them, and they all wept together. And the young women said, 'Surely, we will go back with you to your own

people.' But Naomi said, 'Not so, my daughters. Turn again, for you shall not go with me.' Then the elder of the damsels kissed her, and returned to her own mother; but the younger, whose name is Ruth, said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; and where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.' So, when Naomi saw that Ruth was so minded as not to be put off, she allowed her to come with her. And now, behold, they have been only a few days in Bethlehem, and they are very poor. And this morning as I came with the reapers to the field, the damsel Ruth met me by the roadside, and said, 'I pray thee, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves!' And I said, 'Come, for my master is kind, and he turneth no one away.' So she came, and has followed the reapers until now."

"Thou hast well spoken," said Boaz to the head servant. "Go now back to thy work, and bid the young men let her glean among the sheaves, and molest her not; and let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean the more."

Then he called to Ruth, and said, "Hearest

thou not, my daughter? Let thine eyes be on the reapers, and do thou glean that which they leave behind. And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

Then Ruth, trembling and blushing, bowed her face to the ground, and said to the great man, "Why should you show me so great kindness, seeing that I am a stranger in this land?"

And the great man said, "I have heard of thy kindness to Naomi, thy mother-in-law; and how thou hast left thine own kindred and thy native land, and art come among a people who are strangers to thee. The Lord recompense thee! The Lord keep thee and protect thee!"

And Ruth thanked him for his kindness, and followed on after the workmen. And when the luncheon time came, Boaz asked her to sit down with the reapers and eat of their bread; and he handed her the parched corn, and bade her dip her morsel in the cooling wine.

So she gleaned in the field until evening; and then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about a bushel of barley.

When she went back to her lodgings in the town, her mother-in-law asked her where she had been, that she had gleaned so much. And Ruth said, "I

have been in the fields of the great man who is called Boaz; and he was very kind to me."

And Naomi told her that Boaz was one of their nearest kinsmen, and said, "Blessed may he be! for he has not left off his kindness to the living and the dead."

And Ruth gleaned every day in the fields of Boaz, by the side of his maidens, until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were ended.

II. THE HARVEST FEAST.

Now, Naomi was busy every day planning how she might make her daughter-in-law happy; and she thought, that if she could only persuade the rich man Boaz to marry the damsel, there could be no better fortune. But how could she bring this about, seeing that Ruth was so very poor, and withal a stranger in the land?

There was a curious custom in those times that was intended to keep the property of a family from going to others when the husband happened to die, as had Ruth's husband, without leaving children. In such case, the nearest relative was in honor bound to marry the widow. And so Naomi thought that if Boaz should be reminded of his kinship, and of his duty to marry Ruth, he would be glad

to take her; if not because of her beauty and goodness, then for the sake of her dead husband's estate, that might be saved, and kept in the family. While Ruth was gleaning in the fields, Naomi was thinking how all this might be brought about.

At last the harvest was ended, and the barley was all winnowed; and Boaz had a great feast on his threshing floor; and master and servants and neighbors all met together and rejoiced. That night Naomi took care that Ruth should dress herself in her most beautiful garments, and then she arranged that the damsel and Boaz should meet at the close of the feast.

And Ruth told Boaz of his kinship to her dead husband; and all her words were words of maidenly modesty, but they brought about the very thing that Naomi had planned and desired. The great man listened with delight; and, although he knew that there was one man who was nearer of kin than himself, he made up his mind that he would marry the maiden, if at the same time he might do that which was right. As for Ruth, she hastened back to her lodgings, and told Naomi all that Boaz had said.

“Rejoice, my daughter,” said the mother-in-law, “for surely the man will not rest until he has finished this matter by making thee his wife.”

III. THE WEDDING.

Early the next morning Boaz went up to the gate of the town, and sat down there; for that was the place in which the men were wont to meet to settle all kinds of business and all disputes.

By and by the man came by whom he wished to see; and he cried out to him, "Ho! friend and kinsman, turn aside and sit down here."

And the man turned aside and sat down.

Then they called ten of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit ye down here, and judge concerning the matter that is between us."

And the elders came and sat down.

Then Boaz said to the man whom he had first called, "You no doubt remember our cousin Elimelech, who went away from our town during the time of the great famine, and how he died in a strange land, leaving a widow, Naomi, and two sons."

And the man said, "Yes, I remember."

"Perhaps you have also heard," said Boaz, "that the two sons, after marrying wives, also died, without leaving any children."

"Yes, I have heard that also," said the man.

"Very well, then," said Boaz. "Now, everybody in Bethlehem knows that Elimelech was the owner of a fine piece of land just outside of the town.

Naomi, who has lately come back to her own people, wishes to sell this land; and, unless the kinsmen of Elimelech will redeem it, it will be lost to the family. I need not tell you, my friend, that you are the nearest kinsman, while I stand only in the second place; and so you have the first right to redeem it. Will you redeem it, or will you not?"

And the man said, "I will redeem it."

Then Boaz said, "In the day that you buy it of Naomi, you must also take her daughter-in-law Ruth for your wife; for such is the custom and the law among us."

And the kinsman said, "Then I cannot redeem it, and I give up to you all my claims and rights as a kinsman. Buy it, if you wish, for yourself."

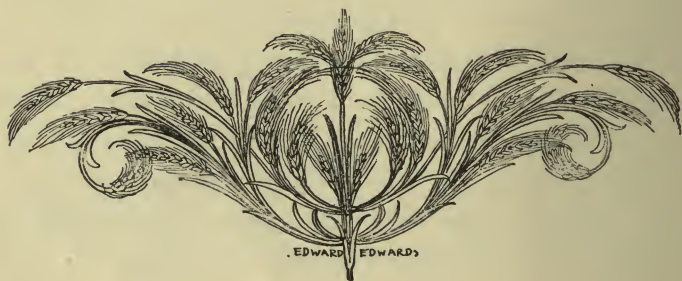
Now, it was the custom in those old times, that, when a bargain was made, the man agreeing to it should loose his shoe, and give it to the other in the presence of the elders of the town. So Boaz loosed his shoe, and gave it to his kinsman. Then he said to the elders, —

"You are witnesses this day that I buy all the land that belonged to my cousin Elimelech and to his two sons, who are dead. I buy also, as my wife, the damsel Ruth, the widow of the younger of the two sons, whom he married in the land of the strangers. Of all this, you are the witnesses this day."

And all the people that were in the gate, as well as the ten elders who sat there, answered, "We are witnesses."

Then they gave him congratulations, and wished him many blessings, and prayed that Ruth might also be blessed, and that their family might bring honor to their country and be famous in Bethlehem. And the women hastened to visit Naomi to tell her how glad they were that all things had turned out so well; and they commended Ruth for her beauty and her goodness and her faithfulness, and said that she was better than seven sons.

And so Boaz and Ruth were married according to the customs of the time, and they lived together happily for many years in the great house which Boaz built in the town of Bethlehem. And travelers in the East are still shown the spot on which that house stood; for it is the spot where, a thousand years later, the Christ child was born.





THE SHEPHERD BOY WHO BECAME KING.

I. THE SEER.

NEAR the village called Bethlehem, or the House of Bread, there lived an old man who had eight sons. I do not know how rich he was, but his neighbors called him Jesse, a word which in their language meant Wealth. His grandfather, whose name was Boaz, had been one of the great men of the place; and his grandmother, whose name was Ruth, had been famous for her goodness and beauty.

One day word was brought to the village that a certain great man was passing that way, and would stop perhaps for a day or two. This great man was a seer, or prophet, and he had been the real ruler of the country for many years. Everybody regarded him with great awe, for it was thought that he had all his power directly from God. Even the King was afraid to do anything without first asking his leave. So, when the people of the House

of Bread heard that Seer Samuel, as he was called, was coming to their village, they were much alarmed, and began to wonder what they had done that he did not approve. While he was yet on the road, they sent some of their chief men to meet him, and find out what he wanted them to do. The men were very glad when they saw that he was coming alone, leading a young white heifer; for that did not look as though he meant to do them harm.

“Do you come peaceably?” they asked.

“I have come to slay this heifer in your village, and so make a thank offering to Heaven,” he answered.

“We are glad that you have seen fit so to honor us,” they said, “and if you are willing, we would like to help you to make this offering.”

“I want the man whom you call Wealth to help me,” said the Seer. “Let him come with his sons, but let every one else stand back.”

So Wealth and seven of his sons went up with the Seer to the top of a hill by the village, and the Seer laid his hands upon them and blessed them. Then they built an altar with stones, and kindled a fire upon it; and when they had killed the white heifer, they burned parts of her body as a thank offering. But the rest of the people stood a good way off, and did not come near.

Then the Seer called each one of the seven sons, beginning with the eldest, and had them pass before him. The first was a tall and very handsome young man, and the Seer seemed much pleased with him.

"Surely, he is noble enough to be our king," he said, and he began to unstop a horn of oil which he held in his hand. Then he must have seen something in the young man's eye which did not please him; for he said, "Pass on, I have no need of you."

The second of the sons was also good-looking and strong. But the Seer said, "This is not the chosen one."

And so it fared with the third and with all the others. There was something about each one of them which the Seer liked; but there was something that he disliked, too. When the last one had been called up and then sent away, the Seer seemed to be in great trouble.

"Surely, I thought to find a king among these young men," he said; "but not one of them is chosen."

Then he said to Wealth, "Are all of your children here?"

"All but one," said Wealth. "The youngest, whom we call Darling, is not here. He is only a little fellow, and I didn't think it worth while to call him."

“Where is he?” asked the Seer.

“He is tending the sheep in the valley over yonder,” said Wealth.

“Send and fetch him,” said the Seer; “and we will not sit down till he comes.”

So they sent and brought the lad from the sheep pasture. He was a ruddy-faced boy, slender and handsome, with eyes as sharp and bright as an eagle’s. The Seer was very much pleased when he saw him.

“This is the chosen one,” he said.

Then he unstopped the horn that was in his hand, and poured the oil on the lad’s head, and blessed him.

“Behold, I anoint thee to be king!” he said. Then he turned to Wealth and the seven young men who stood around wondering, and said, “See that you tell no man of what has been done this day.”

And he took his staff in his hand, and walked down the hill, and away towards his own home, and never looked back. And the lad went back to his sheep.

II. THE KING.

Some time after that, a great change came over the King of the people who called themselves the Children of the Prince. He seemed to have lost

his senses. He was cruel even to his best friends ; and there were times when he was so wild that nobody dared to go near him. The Seer said that there was an evil spirit in him.

There was only one thing that seemed to please him, and that was music. At the sound of a harp he would become gentle and mild, and all his wildness would leave him.

And so the best harpers in all the country were invited to come and play before the King. All went well for a time. So long as they played sweet tunes, and made no discord, the King seemed pleased, and listened quietly ; but as soon as any one struck a false note he grew furious again, and at last he drove them away from his palace.

Then some one said, " Did you ever hear of the young shepherd who keeps his father's sheep in the south valley ? No one can play the harp so well as he. Even the beasts like to listen to him."

The King overheard what was said, and he asked, " Who is this young shepherd ? "

" He is the son of the man who is called Wealth," was the answer.

" Send and fetch him to me," said the King.

And so messengers went down to the little village, and told Wealth that the King wanted to see the lad who tended the sheep, and who played so sweetly

on the harp. And the old man called the lad from the pastures, and gave him a donkey loaded with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a fat kid, and sent him with them to the King. And the King was much pleased when he saw him; for he was tall and comely, and the music of the harp cheered his heart until his madness left him, and he became as gentle as a child.

“The sound of the harp has driven the evil spirit quite away,” said the Seer.

And the boy became the King's page, and lived for a whole year in the King's house.

III. THE GIANT.

About this time a tribe of rude men called Wanderers, or Philistines, came up from the south, and began to overrun the country. The King sent out his warriors against them, but they were driven back. It looked as though every city and field would fall into the hands of the Wanderers. There was only one thing to be done: the King himself must go out at the head of his army, and give battle to his savage foes.

There was no longer any need for the young page in the King's household, for everybody was too busy to listen to music now. So, with his

harp on his shoulder, he went back home, and tended his father's flock of sheep as he had done before. But his older brothers went out as soldiers in the army of the King.

The Wanderers pitched their camp on the top of a hill, and the Children of the Prince pitched their camp on the top of another hill; and there was a broad valley between them. Each army was afraid of the other, and so neither wanted to begin the battle. All day and all night they lay there, making great boasts, but doing nothing.

In the morning a huge giant, who was the champion of the Wanderers, went out and stood in the valley midway between the camps. He was called the Exile, and he was more than ten feet in height. He wore a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was clad in a coat of mail which was made of brass and weighed two or three hundred pounds; and he had greaves of brass on his legs and a target of brass between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a long beam, and its heavy iron point was as much as a common man could lift.

This giant stood in the valley and cried out to the King's army on the mountain top, "What are you doing up there, you cowards? Look at me! I am a Wanderer, and you are only slaves to a

King. But I will make an agreement with you. Let one of your men come down and fight me. If he can kill me, then all my followers will be your slaves; but if I kill him, then you shall be our slaves. Isn't that fair enough? I dare the best man among you to come down and fight with me!"

When the King and his warriors heard these words, and saw the big giant, they were very much afraid; and not one of them dared make him any answer. For forty days the two armies lay in camp on the hilltops, and every morning and evening the Exile went down into the valley and made the same speech. The soldiers on both sides were often drawn up in line of battle; but the chiefs were afraid to begin the fight, and after awhile all went back to their tents.

Things kept on in this way until food began to be scarce. The Children of the Prince would have suffered from hunger if their kinsmen at home had not helped them; and the Wanderers would have starved if they had not sent companies out to bring in pillage from the farms.

IV. THE CAMP.

One morning Wealth called to his son, the shepherd lad, and said, "Darling, I hear that the King's men have hardly enough to eat, and I am

afraid that your brothers are hungry. Suppose you let one of the hired men take care of the sheep to-day, while you go up to the camp and see how they are getting on. You may take a wagon with you; and you may put into it three pecks of parched corn and ten loaves of bread for your brothers. Put in ten cheeses, too, as a present to their captain. Find out how everything is going on in the camp, and then come back and tell me."

The lad was delighted to be sent upon such an errand. He loaded the wagon with the corn and the bread and the cheeses; and then, with a trusty man to drive for him, he set off across the country towards the camp. He had to take a roundabout way, for he was afraid of meeting some of the small bands of Wanderers that were out foraging. When he reached the end of his journey, it was late in the afternoon; and he found the two armies drawn up in order of battle, each on its own hilltop. The men on both sides were making a great deal of noise, shouting back and forth, and beating their shields; but that was about as near as they ever got to a fight.

The lad left the wagon with the driver, and hurried up the hill to the place where his three brothers were standing. They were right glad

to see him; and when he told them about the parched corn and the loaves, they thanked him warmly.

While they stood talking on the brow of the hill, the giant Exile came out into the valley and made his speech. And all the men who were nearest to him ran back, they were so much afraid. When the lad saw and heard him, he said, —

“Why don't some one of our men go down and fight the fellow?”

“Alas!” said his brothers, “there are no giants among the Children of the Prince; and do you think that any common man can stand up against such a foe?”

“Has the King offered any reward to the man who will kill him?” asked the lad.

“Yes,” they said. “He has offered to give him a chest full of gold, and to let him choose the fairest of the King's daughters for his wife; and he will make his father and his brothers rulers among the people.”

“I don't see how the King can offer more than that,” said the lad. “I think I'll try my hand against the giant myself.”

His big brothers laughed at him. “You proud little upstart,” they said, “don't you think you had

better go back home and look after your few sheep?"

But some one who overheard him ran and told the King, "There is a young man up here, just from the country, who says that he will fight the giant. Wouldn't it be well to let him try?"

The King sent for him at once; but, when he saw that it was only his little harper, he shook his head.

"Darling," he said, "you can play sweet music, and are a very good page in times of peace; but you cannot fight a giant like this Exile. Why, you are only a boy, and he is a man of war, trained to fight from his youth! You'd better keep well out of his way."

"Great King," said the lad, "let me tell you what I have done, and then you may judge whether I am not strong enough to fight. Only a few days ago, as I was tending my father's sheep, there came a bear out of the wood and took a lamb from the flock. I leaped up and ran after him, and snatched the lamb from his grasp, and killed him before he could turn against me."

"That was a brave thing to do," said the King; "but this Exile is stronger than a bear."

"Well, I will tell you something else," said the lad. "The very next day a lion came down from

the mountain and seized the finest lamb in the flock. I was no more afraid of him than I was of the bear. I ran after him; and when he turned upon me, I caught him by the beard, and struck him with my sharp staff and killed him. It was not altogether of my own strength that I did this; but the God of my father, he helped me and made me strong. And he will help me against this giant Exile."

"I like the way you talk," said the King. "Get yourself ready, and go out against this Exile; and may the God of your father and of my father go with you!"

V. THE SLING.

The King called to one of his chiefs that stood near, and told him to arm the lad, and make him ready, so that he could go out in the morning and fight with the proud giant. The King's own son chose the armor for him, and it was the best that could be found in the camp. They put a helmet of brass upon his head, and clothed him in a coat of mail, and gave him a bright new sword. But all these things were so heavy that when the lad tried to walk he could hardly move.

"How am I going to fight in these things?" he

said. "I have never practiced in armor, and I can't go out this way."

Then he took off the armor, and threw the sword upon the ground, and said that he would arm himself in his own way. So, with nothing in his hands but his shepherd's staff and a sling, he went out in the morning to meet the giant. On his way down the hill he crossed a brook, and there he picked up five smooth round stones, and put them into the little shepherd's bag which he carried at his side.

By this time the giant had come out into the valley, and was making the speech which he had made so often before, and was daring the Children of the Prince to send out a man to fight him. When he saw the lad coming down the hill with only a shepherd's staff in his hand, he laughed.

"Do you think I am a dog," he roared, "that you send a boy out against me with a stick?—Come on, my little fellow, and I will feed you to the birds and the beasts!"

Then the lad said, "You are very large and strong, and you come out with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come in the name of the God of my father and of my people. This day I will smite you, and take off your head, and give your big body to the birds and the wild beasts;

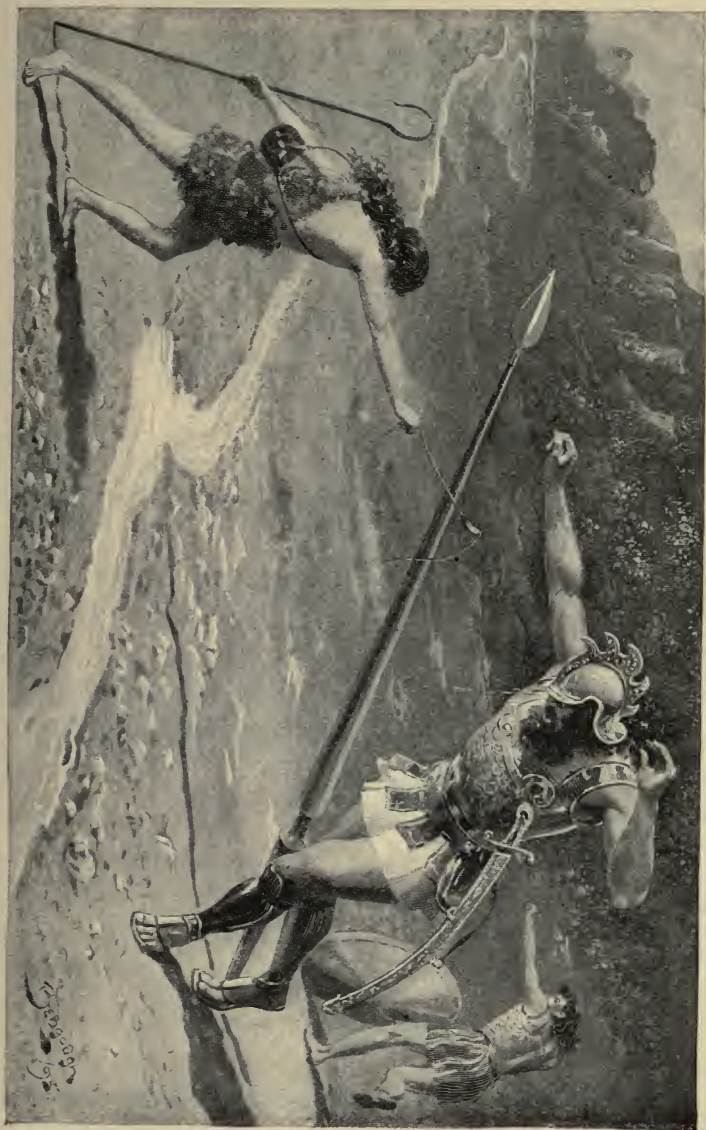
and everybody shall know that our God is the true God.”

Then the giant was very angry. He strode forward across the valley, shaking his great spear; but the lad was not at all afraid of him, and ran down the hill to meet him; and as he ran, he took one of the smooth round stones which he had picked up, and put it into his sling. The giant raised his spear to throw it, but the lad was much quicker than he. He twirled the sling once, twice, three times — and then the stone went whizzing through the air, and struck the Exile in the forehead. It struck so hard that it sunk deep into the big fellow’s head, and he fell upon his face to the ground. Then the lad ran and stood upon him, and drew his big sword from its sheath, and cut off his head. And that was the end of the Exile.

When the Wanderers, who were in their camp, saw that their champion was dead, they were filled with fear, and fled pellmell down the farther side of the hill. And the King’s men shouted and ran after them, and did not stop until they had chased them out of the country.

Then everybody praised the lad for what he had done; and the King took him into his own house, and made him captain of a thousand men. And, as they marched through the land, the women and

HE FELL UPON HIS FACE TO THE GROUND.



girls came out from the cities with music and song, and danced before them; and as they played, one company would sing, —

“The King has slain a thousand men,
A hero brave is he.”

And then another company would answer, —

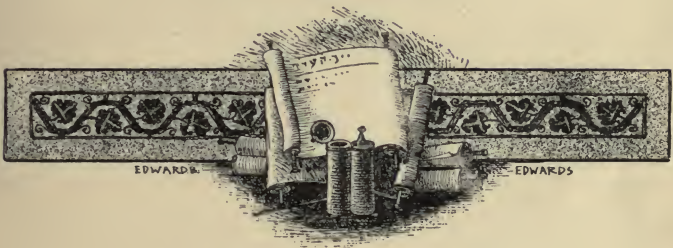
“This lad has slain ten thousand men,
He’s set our country free.”

This did not please the King very well; but, when he saw that everybody was ready to take the boy’s part, he said nothing.

Now, I need not tell you any more of the strange history of the lad whom his father called Darling; for, after his great fight with the giant Exile, he was no longer looked upon as a lad, but as a prince. After a time he married the King’s pretty daughter; and when at last the King and his son were both slain in battle, the Children of the Prince chose him to be their ruler. Thus the words of the old Seer when he poured oil on the boy’s head came true; and he reigned over his people for many years, and was the greatest king that his country ever had.

The name of this shepherd lad was David, for that word in his own language meant darling; and the giant Exile whom he slew is commonly called

Goliah. And even to this day the descendants of the Children of the Prince take pride in talking about the glorious reign of King David, for it was then that their country reached the highest point of its prosperity; and in the churches all over the world the people still recite the songs called Psalms, that King David sang when playing upon his harp in his kingly palace three thousand years ago.



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